THE Nation.

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KATHA POLLITT

INVADE THE CAYMANS!
DAVID CAY JOHNSTON

PICTURE GENERATION
BARRY SCHWABSKY

JUNE 1, 2009
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# Letters

## Women's Health on the Back Burner

New York City

Sheryl McCarthy, in "Behind the Abortion Color Line" [April 27], is correct that women who cannot get effective, affordable birth control are more likely to have unintended pregnancies and abortions. Most women will spend about thirty years trying to prevent pregnancy, making contraception a critical component of healthcare. In my practice, women tell me every day that they cannot afford birth control; nor can they afford to miss work to wait all day for free supplies. Is it so surprising that nearly half of US pregnancies are unplanned, with little change over decades?

We physicians need to do our part: medical education must improve to enable honest conversations between doctors and patients. Few physicians receive comprehensive training about birth control—as little as one lecture in medical school. Medical schools and residency programs should increase evidence-based training about the range of contraceptives available and how to discuss sexuality with patients.

The wider public also needs to learn about the benefits and risks of contraception. The benefits of contraception far outweigh the risks, especially compared with the risks of pregnancy and childbirth. McCarthy highlights the side effects of hormonal contraception; women should also know that hormonal contraception prevents ovarian and uterine cancer, and improves acne and menstrual cramping. Some women have trouble with one contraceptive but are able to use another. I've helped hundreds of women find birth control that works for them, whether IUD, pill, patch, ring, injection, implant or tubal ligation.

Of course, education alone won't prevent unintended pregnancies—economic factors and lack of health insurance also contribute to the problem. But widespread knowledge about contraceptive options—among patients *and* physicians—would be a step in the right direction.

Anne Davis, MD, MPH, *medical director*
*Physicians for Reproductive Choice & Health*

letters@thenation.com

## Healthcare: Radical Reform Needed

Baltimore

I was a member of the Health Care Reform Task Force in the Clinton White House, and I have difficulty accepting that the reform proposal failed because it was too radical, as Lester Feder claims in "Fighting for Our Health" [April 27]. In my book *The Politics of Health Policy*, I present a long list of reasons the reform failed. Feder's reason is not on that list. Far from being too radical, the proposal was much too accommodating to the health insurance industry; it did not dare to confront it. Grassroots Democrats, already disappointed and angry about President Clinton's approval of NAFTA, could not be mobilized to support the reform proposal.

Without a clear mobilization in the country, such as we saw in the civil rights era, we are not going to see true healthcare reform. Feder's recommendations to give more money for technology and research (to investigate how doctors can practice better and more cheaply) and to subsidize premiums for those who cannot pay are exceedingly unambitious. They don't even come close to the root of the problem: the enormous power of the insurance-medical-industrial complex.

Vincent Navarro, MD, PhD
*Professor of health policy*
*The Johns Hopkins Medical Institutions*

## Health 'Insurance': What Is It Good For?

Washington, D.C.

Kate Michelman, in "A System From Hell" [April 27], asks "if 'health insurance' does not pay for healthcare when people need it, then what exactly do those words mean?" Indeed, our healthcare system is a relic of another era. Insurance is designed to cover risk, not certainty. Fall off your horse and need a doctor to set your arm; get struck down with smallpox and need a doctor to treat you—in both cases, the need for care (and therefore coverage) could not be predicted or anticipated.

*(continued on page 26)*

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# Coming Up Thorns

The government says it sees "green shoots" sprouting among the thorny economic indicators. We fear that this is a willful triumph of hope over reality—a way to avoid hard decisions and wait to see what happens next. The happy talk may yield bright headlines for a few days, but it could be dangerous for the Obama presidency.

EDITORIAL

The US economy, not to mention the world's, is nowhere near what ordinary mortals would recognize as recovery. Most arrows still point downward: home prices are dropping at record rates, foreclosures are at an all-time high, retail sales continue to plunge and industrial production is at the lowest level since 1998. Meanwhile, the unemployment rate climbed to 8.9 percent as 539,000 people lost their jobs in April, only a slight improvement on the 699,000 jobs lost in March. April may not have been the cruelest month, but it was still the sixteenth consecutive month of job losses, pushing unemployment to the highest level since 1983. White House economists can cherry-pick the numbers, but premature optimism could swiftly undermine the president's credibility.

One thing that has improved lately is the White House's ability to stage-manage events and spin the news. Recall that Treasury Secretary Tim Geithner's early policy announcements were disastrous, spreading panic instead of confidence in the marketplace. Now Geithner is all over the major media explaining the results of Treasury's "stress tests" for the nineteen largest banks before the numbers were released. No banks are insolvent, he assured, and none will be allowed to fail. The media, fed tidbits of good news, spread the glow. The tests were a collegial collaboration in which endangered banks were allowed to talk the examiners out of more dire conclusions.

The Treasury results probably underestimate the storm ahead but are still quite ugly. A number of the leading banks must somehow come up with another $75 billion in new capital. Treasury gives them six months to do it. How might they manage this? By pumping up a new stock market bubble and selling many more shares before it pops. What happens if the bankers fail? The Obama administration does not say. But stand ready, taxpayers. If hope dies, we will be asked to rescue the bankers again and again and maybe again.

The most disturbing aspect of Obama's approach is his reluctance to face the dimensions of the economic catastrophe. The president is clearly hoping to avoid that decisive moment when he must assume full direction of failing financial institutions, either by imposing conservatorship over banks or through temporary nationalization. He is trying to have it both ways—providing enough public capital to keep banks afloat but not claiming the power of controlling ownership. But events are forcing him into a corner, and he may have to claim that emergency power.

The "hands-off" pretense already looks strained. Treasury holds 36 percent of Citigroup, all of AIG and a growing stake in GMAC. At some point, the charade of "private enterprise" living on public funds will have to be abandoned—especially if these banks stick with their reluctance to restart lending.

Obama's awkward ownership dilemma may come to a head in the auto industry. The restructuring plan for General Motors is still unfolding, but the current version calls for 89 percent of the reformed company to be owned by the Treasury and the United Auto Workers retiree trust fund (which also holds 55 percent of the new Chrysler). So who is going to run GM? If not the government, might it

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Tom Hayden: Politics of escalation
Ruth Benedict: Women soldiers
Melissa Harris-Lacewell: Elizabeth Edwards

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be the workers and their union? Or will both of them defer passively to corporate managers?

The plan for GM, not yet accepted by Washington or the UAW, poses an explosive question. The blueprint calls for GM to close four North American assembly plants; double its car production in Mexico, South Korea, China and Japan; and sell the cars back to the US market. Those terms are poisonous for American autoworkers *and* taxpayers—saving the company by dumping the workers and boosting foreign imports. If that is the deal, wouldn't bankruptcy be a better choice?

As for the banks, citizens are asking similar questions. If we own 36 percent of Citigroup, why is the government allowing the bank to punch up the interest rates on its credit cards? That sounds like hitting the same folks twice. Other financial institutions, meanwhile, are squeezing businesses by canceling lines of credit—the opposite of what Obama says he wants. This may or may not be good for the banks, but it is definitely not good politics. Americans are not being served.

# The More Things Change

In the great Italian historical novel *The Leopard*, the Sicilian prince asks his nephew Tancredi why he is joining Garibaldi's revolt against their king. Tancredi replies, "Unless we…take a hand now they'll foist a Republic on us. If we want things to stay as they are, things will have to change."

COMMENT

Treasury Secretary Tim Geithner, economic adviser Larry Summers and the rest of Barack Obama's merry band of Wall Street revolutionaries certainly seem to have brought change. Building on the bank bailout of the waning days of the Bush era, they have committed at least $4 trillion in cash, credit and guarantees to rescuing the nation's bankers and brokers from their own reckless behavior. America's modest level of crony capitalism has swollen to full-service financial-firm welfare. Inasmuch as US corporations can live forever, this is the cradle of a corporate socialism that potentially has no grave.

Federal Reserve chair Ben Bernanke says he understands that citizens are "concerned" that the people who caused the problem are being rewarded. But suck it up, he advises. "Our economic system is critically dependent on the free flow of credit."

Just so. But on what, the concerned citizen might ask, does the flow of credit depend? Last fall, one could have reasonably argued that lenders, their capital having evaporated in the crash, had no money. The TED spread, which tracks the difference between Treasury and interbank interest rates and is the most closely watched measure of credit availability, was then at an all-time high (460 basis points)—reflecting the heavy risk premiums banks were charging one another.

By January the spread was back to its pre-crisis level of less than 100, indicating that banks were lending to one another again. Why? Because, given the new government safety net, they trust that they will get their money back with interest. But why aren't they lending to the rest of the economy? It's not a cabal against the public; banks make their money by lending.

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# Noted.

**MEDICAL MALPRACTICE:** Senate Finance Committee chair **Max Baucus**—the insurance-industry-friendly Democrat who grabbed the lead in the collaboration between Congress and the Obama administration on healthcare reform—has come up with a novel way to express his commitment to provide care for the nearly 50 million Americans who have no health insurance and the roughly equal number who have inadequate coverage. Baucus is having doctors and nurses arrested. Medical practitioners who have shown up at Baucus-chaired "roundtable discussions" to propose a cure—a single-payer plan designed to ensure that all Americans have access to healthcare while at the same time holding down costs—are being taken into custody and removed from the hearing rooms.

At the first Finance Committee session on May 5, Dr. **Margaret Flowers** and seven others were arrested when they urged Baucus to include witnesses who support single-payer. A week later, at the opening of the committee's second hearing, five more members of **Physicians for a National Health Care Program** and the **California Nurses Association/National Nurses Organizing Committee** were taken into custody when they objected to the narrow character of the deliberations. Single-payer advocates went the civil disobedience route only after their repeated requests for a place at the table had been rejected by Baucus. "They just don't want to hear from single-payer," explains Dr. Flowers, a pediatrician from Maryland. "We've been trying for months now, meeting with members of Congress, to be included in the hearings and the events that they are holding, and they keep excluding us."

Baucus's approach is an unhealthy one—for the reform debate and for democracy. JOHN NICHOLS

**PAPER TRAILS:** In April *The Nation*'s **Christopher Hayes** broke the story of a multibillion-dollar alternative-fuel tax loophole that was subsidizing paper companies to add fossil fuel to a process that didn't need it. (The credit was designed to incentivize the reduction of fossil fuel use through the addition of biofuels.) Now it appears the jig is up.

At the time the story was published, the loophole had received scant attention in the press, though the paper industry was abuzz with speculation about just how long it would be before someone noticed. In response to Hayes's reporting, criticism of the loophole gained momentum. Environmental groups were quick to spring into action and begin advocating that Congress close the loophole. That prompted coverage from the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*.

On April 23 Democratic Senator **Max Baucus** of Montana called the loophole an "unintended adverse consequence. It's very expensive, and it should be closed." Senators from paper-producing states (**Olympia Snowe** from Maine and **Blanche Lincoln** from Arkansas) defended the credit, pointing to the hard times the industry is facing. The machinists' union, which represents members in paper plants, also rose up in support of the credit.

But (thankfully) it appears that their arguments have failed to keep the White House from acting. In May the Office of Management and Budget released its "green book" of proposed changes to tax law. Included on page 124 is an amendment to the alternative-fuel tax credit that would close the paper industry loophole.

Now the question becomes one of timing. Industry analysts project that the loophole could cost as much as $8 billion this year. Will Congress manage to pass a bill that closes the loophole soon, or will the industry's defenders succeed in stalling action until the credit expires at the end of the year? As with many of the administration's initiatives, it remains to be seen how much political capital the White House is willing to expend to make sure that the loophole is closed soon. LAURA DEAN

**AIDES TO APARTHEID:** An April 8 court decision has allowed lawsuits to proceed against firms that assisted in torture, killing and apartheid in South Africa, including **GM**, **Ford**, **Daimler** and **IBM.** But the decision dismissed claims against corporate defendants accused merely of doing business with the apartheid government, including major banks. Now lawyers for the victims are investigating claims that banks supplied covert credit cards to South African security forces for secret operations.

With such new evidence, the victims' lawyers hope that the court will reconsider this part of its decision and reinstate claims against banks. The attorneys are basing their case on testimony given by the notorious former police spy **Craig Williamson** before the **Truth and Reconciliation Commission**.

Judge **Shira Scheindlin**, of the Southern District of New York, found that the automobile companies were responsible for providing armored military vehicles that violently suppressed and terrorized South Africa's black population, and that company employees were "intimately involved" in torture. IBM, according to the judge, knew that its computers and software were used to "register individuals, strip them of their South African citizenship and segregate them in particular areas of South Africa." **Michael Hausfeld**, a lead attorney for the plaintiffs, called the decision "a major advancement in international human rights law."

The victims are seeking unspecified monetary damages. Their class-action suits test the extent of the 200-year-old **Alien Torts Act**, which allows non-Americans to sue companies that have significant assets in the United States if they can prove violations of international law. "Thousands of apartheid victims can now have their day in court," said **Paul Hoffman**, another lead attorney for the plaintiffs. JOHN S. FRIEDMAN

**SPRING LAURELS**: *The Nation*'s June 30, 2008, special issue, "The New Inequality," a collaboration with the **Institute for Policy Studies**, was awarded the 2009 **Sidney Hillman Foundation Prize in Magazine Journalism**. The award recognizes journalism that "fosters social and economic justice." Journalist **Joshua Kors** was named a finalist for the **Livingston Awards for Young Journalists**, in recognition of his reporting in *The Nation* about the denial of health benefits to veterans. Finally, *The Nation* has been nominated for "General Excellence" by the **Utne Reader Independent Press Awards**, which honor the best work in independent print journalism.

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It's the recession; with rising unemployment and falling sales, making loans to businesses is generally too risky.

So banks have used the bailout to increase their reserves, finance mergers, overpay their executives and hire lobbyists to kill Obama's bill to allow bankruptcy judges to protect homeowners from foreclosure. Geithner, Summers, Bernanke and the rest of their cohort certainly know this. It follows that the purpose of the multitrillion-dollar bailout is not to spark a recovery through increased lending but to preserve our financial behemoths until the economy recovers. Then, unburdened by their self-created bad debt, the hedge-funders, arbitrageurs and leverage artists will be in good shape to get back into the credit-bubble business.

The real recovery, which will be financed when banks begin to see customers coming into their clients' stores with money in their pockets, is being left to the comparatively modest stimulus package. Many economists think we will need a new round of government spending perhaps by the end of the year.

The president correctly says that the source of growth has to shift from debt-driven consumption to the production of goods and services that produce jobs and higher living standards. But his team's priority is to restore things to pretty much as they were. How else do we explain the kid-glove handling of Citigroup, AIG, Merrill Lynch et al., compared with the harsher treatment of the auto industry? Downsizing the auto companies, bankrupting suppliers and slashing autoworkers' wages is hardly a way to accelerate an economic rebound. If real growth was your primary objective, would you leave the fate of GM and Chrysler to "auto czar" Steve Rattner, a hedge-fund operator whose firm is deep in a pension-fund bribery scandal?

The pervasive influence of Wall Street on this government's "change" agenda was evident at the recent G-20 economic summit in London. The first priority for the US economy—and, one would think, for Obama's future—was to get the other developed nations to expand their economies. Unless they do, much of the undersize US spending stimulus will be lost to an increased trade deficit. The Europeans—led by the fiscally conservative Germans—were disinclined. Instead, they argued for the international regulation of finance.

In the interest of most Americans, the response should have been obvious: offer to accept international financial regulation in return for a European agreement on a stronger domestic stimulus. A deal may or may not have been struck. But Wall Street, not wanting to be subject to international regulators who might be beyond the reach of their money and influence, would have none of it. If that weakened the US recovery, so be it. The administration concurred. The meeting ended with a few coins tossed to the International Monetary Fund, and the status quo was preserved.

The public feathering of the corporate nest will certainly continue. After releasing the results of the Treasury's big bank "stress tests," in early May, Geithner told ten banks to go out and get more private capital. At first, bank stocks rose. But when the markets realized that the stress tests were more like open-book exams, the stocks fell back. That there might be more toxic assets in the vaults than the rushed and understaffed government audit teams could find dampened investor interest. Since these banks are "too big to fail," the Treasury will have to further sweeten the pot, either with more cash or by converting the preferred bank shares it already owns into common stock—or both.

Angst about government ownership, of course, babbles through the business media. But the smart money understands that the revolving door of cash and people between Wall Street and Washington will protect the plutocracy. In this regard, the revelation that Summers moonlighted as a hedge-fund consultant while serving as president of Harvard is certainly reassuring. As was the *New York Times* report that a bill the Treasury sent to Congress expanding the government's bank takeover powers was drafted by a law firm that works for the finance industry's lobbying group. And if a Democratic president elected on a message of transformation brings us a treasury secretary who is a protégé of Robert Rubin of Citigroup, Pete Peterson of Blackstone and Henry Kissinger, what's the worry?

"All will be changed," the prince repeats to a retainer. "Then all will be the same."

JEFF FAUX

*Jeff Faux was the founder of, and is now distinguished fellow at, the Economic Policy Institute. His latest book is* The Global Class War *(Wiley).*

## Calvin Trillin, Deadline Poet

### Manny Ramirez

They came in droves to cheer on Manny,
Who made each game a hootenanny.
In awe, they shouted, "Wow! How can he
Drive balls to every nook and cranny?"
Now they know.

# Lax Little Islands

The Cayman Islands are well known to those seeking sun, sand and sea—and for their hospitality to US corporations seeking to escape taxes, launder money and use other discreet financial services. The islands' tax dodgers help multinational corporations move jobs offshore; they also give aid and comfort to terrorists, drug dealers and divorcing spouses trying to hide money. Honest taxpayers have to make up for the revenues lost through this offshore cheating in three ways: we pay more in taxes, we get fewer government services and we incur rising government debt. Interest on that debt, which doubled under the Bush administration, now equals all the individual income taxes paid from New Year's to around June 10. And that cost means less government investment in research, education and the infrastructure on which commerce depends. Untaxed money hiding in the Caymans and other tax havens means the rest of us pay a higher price for less civilization.

COMMENT

In short, the Caymans, and other tax havens, are parasites that

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weaken the United States and other developed nations.

President Obama proposed on May 4 to crack down on offshore tax cheating; that proposal does not go nearly far enough. Instead of settling for a dime on the dollar, as Obama's plan would do, let's get serious about offshore tax cheating, both legalized and criminal. Let's do what we did to halt the imagined threats of communists in Grenada, depose a drug-dealing president in Panama and find those imaginary weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. Let's invade the Caymans!

The islands, which belong to Britain, have no military and just 300 or so police. An invasion force composed of tax lawyers, forensic auditors and a handful of computer technicians could execute a hostile takeover without firing a shot.

The Caymans are not really a country; they are a law firm posing as one. More than 12,000 "companies" operate out of a single building known as Ugland House, home to the law firm Maples & Calder. As Obama put it, "Either this is the largest building in the world or the largest tax scam." Under Caymans law these companies are barred from doing any business in the Caymans except hiding assets and profits. That means shares of stock, bonds and cash may technically be owned in the Caymans—which claims to be the world's fifth-largest center of bank deposits—but are really housed in New York, Greenwich, Houston, San Francisco. There is $1.9 trillion in bank deposits in the Caymans—money actually invested in the United States and other countries but invisible to the IRS.

The Clinton administration enabled this through a rule known as "check the box," which helped companies funnel profits into untaxed havens. US tax rules, liberally expanded by the Bush administration, enabled frauds like Enron to create hundreds of paper companies in the Caymans and other tax havens like Liechtenstein, Turks and Caicos, and the Isle of Man. Enron, as I revealed in a *New York Times* story in January 2002, paid no taxes because it had created hundreds of paper companies in these places. A subsequent investigation by the Congressional Joint Committee on Taxation uncovered internal documents describing Enron's tax department as a "profit center." Dick Cheney's Halliburton subsidiary, KBR—the old Kellogg Brown & Root construction company—has at least 21,000 employees paid via Caymans subsidiaries to escape taxes. KBR hired executives through these paper companies, enabling them to evade Social Security and Medicare taxes on their salaries and bonuses, much of which the taxpayers provided through Pentagon contracts.

President Obama estimates that his proposals for ending tax haven abuses will raise $101 billion over a decade. The Senate Permanent Investigations subcommittee puts the annual tax loss at $100 billion; Treasury sets the figure at $123 billion. Collecting those lost billions could mean that Americans could pay no withholding tax from November 15 to December 31; it could pay for healthcare for about 20 million of the roughly 50 million Americans without health insurance.

Because we are civilized, we should make the Caymans invasion the last resort in an escalating series of steps designed to persuade the islands to stop undermining US national security. For starters, as I proposed in *Tax Notes* magazine, Congress should pass a law funding pursuit of every major tax cheat, just as we pursue every killer, rapist and drug dealer. Using offshore accounts to cheat the government out of $50,000 or more for two or more years should be made a felony per se. Then let's provide an escape hatch, which would spare prosecution of anyone who fesses up and fully pays taxes, penalties and interest. The same law should make public the name and details of every person or company that skips the opportunity to make things right.

Next, Congress should require that the Caymans and fellow tax resorts end their secrecy retroactively. To encourage cooperation it could ban US financial transactions and bar Americans from going there on vacation—measures we have imposed on Cuba for almost fifty years.

Congress is likely to do much less. The multinationals with tax havens have much more sway than John or Jane Q. Citizen. The reliably corporate-leaning journalists are openly expressing doubt that our senators and representatives will go after even a dime on the dollar from rich tax cheats to ease our burdens. Reform begins with your demanding it. DAVID CAY JOHNSTON

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*David Cay Johnston, who received a 2001 Pulitzer Prize for his coverage of the tax beat, is a columnist for* Tax Notes *and teaches the law of the ancient world at Syracuse University's law and management schools. He is the author of* Free Lunch: How the Wealthiest Americans Enrich Themselves at Government Expense (and Stick You With the Bill) *and* Perfectly Legal: The Covert Campaign to Rig Our Tax System to Benefit the Super Rich—and Cheat Everybody Else.

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# Ten Things.

## Ten Things You Can Do to Fight World Hunger

Our planet produces enough food to feed its more than 960 million undernourished people. The basic cause of global hunger is not underproduction; it is a production and distribution system that treats food as a commodity rather than a human right. In developing countries huge agribusinesses, fat with government subsidies, sell their unsustainable (and sometimes genetically modified) products at a reduced rate, thus making it impossible for local farmers to compete. Farmers who can't compete can't feed their own families or work their own fields. Hunger becomes both the cause and effect of poverty.

Ruth Messinger, president of American Jewish World Service, says sending food aid is not a sustainable way to end hunger. Rather, people must be empowered to raise their own food. She proposes Ten Things we can do to help solve the world's growing hunger problem (for more info, go to TheNation.com).

**1** Write letters to the editor and op-ed articles in your local paper calling on the government to cut or end subsidies that encourage large agribusinesses to overproduce grains and dump their surpluses on the developing world at sub-market prices. This ultimately places poor communities at the mercy of volatile global commodity prices. Learn more at tradeobservatory.org/issue_foodSecurity.cfm.

**2** Ask your representatives in Congress to demand that more foreign food aid be in the form of cash and training rather than food. Farmers in the global South know how to grow food but lack the resources, inputs and tools to farm effectively, develop markets and compete in the world marketplace.

**3** Learn the specifics of what makes products "fair trade." Buy them where available. Download "Green America's Guide to Fair Trade" for a definition of "fair trade" and a list of organizations that follow these specifications. Go to coopamerica.org/programs/fairtrade/orderguide.cfm.

**4** Conserve energy. With a reduced demand for fuel—which spiked as the cost of fuel for shipping rose wildly last year—global commodity prices should stabilize. Although imports are not the solution to hunger, they have a role to play because First World consumers want a variety of foods.

**5** Pressure the Obama administration to come up with a renewable energy policy that does not stress ethanol and other biofuels. As demand for biofuels has grown over the past few years, farmers in the developed and developing worlds have set aside more and more land for fuel production, degrading the environment and reducing food for human consumption (go to oaklandinstitute.org and click "Agro Fuel Watch").

**6** Eat less meat. Every pound of meat produced requires sixteen pounds of grain; food given to farm animals each year could feed the world's hungry with plenty to spare. Search "Diet for a Small Planet" and "We Feed the World" at bullfrogfilms.com.

**7** Support grassroots projects that advance sustainable agriculture at the community level. Organizations like American Jewish World Service (ajws.org) partner with grassroots organizations in the global South that use sustainable farming techniques.

**8** Persuade your local editorial writers to cover hunger in a way that focuses on economic rights rather than food scarcity. Emphasize that the underlying causes of poverty are political instability, joblessness, gender inequality, illiteracy and limited access to education, loss of land, disenfranchisement, forced migration and preventable epidemics. These hamper local food production and sustainable development (for examples of current coverage go to tradeobservatory.org and click "Headlines").

**9** Demand a worldwide reduction in the sale of pesticides, herbicides and genetically modified seeds, which benefit large agribusinesses like Monsanto because they do not reproduce, forcing farmers to purchase new seeds year after year. Watch *Future of Food* for more information, available at hulu.com or youtube.com.

**10** Advocate for food security as a human right. Even though the United Nations has declared that nutrition is a universal right, many member nations have adopted policies that reinforce a global system whereby food is treated as a commodity to be bought and sold by speculators.

Read "The Politics of Hunger" (wfp.org/content/politics-hunger-foreign-affairs). Remember that global hunger is a local problem, a feminist problem (go to land-in-uganda.org), a socioeconomic problem and, most urgently, a political problem that can be overcome.

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CONCEIVED BY WALTER MOSLEY with research by Rae Gomes

*"Ten Things" is a monthly feature. Readers who wish to propose ideas for it should e-mail NationTenThings@gmail.com.*

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# Alexander Cockburn

## Who Needs Yesterday's Papers?

I read the anguished valedictories to our sinking newspaper industry, the calls for some sort of government bailout or subsidy, with mounting incredulity. It's like hearing the witches in *Macbeth* evoked as if they were the beautiful Aphrodite and her rivals vying for the judgment of Paris. Sonorous phrases about "public service" mingle with fearful yelps about the "dramatically diminished version of democracy" that looms over America if the old corporate print press goes the way of the steam engine. In *The Nation* recently, John Nichols and Robert W. McChesney quavered that "as journalists are laid off and newspapers cut back or shut down, whole sectors of our civic life go dark" and that "journalism is collapsing, and with it comes the most serious threat in our lifetimes to self-government and the rule of law as it has been understood here in the United States."

I came to America in 1973 to the *Village Voice*, which Dan Wolf, Ed Fancher and Norman Mailer founded in 1955 to bring light to those whole sectors of civic life kept in darkness by the major newspapers of the day, starting with the *New York Times*. As a tot I'd been given bracing tutorials about the paradigms of journalism and class power by my father, Claud, who'd founded his newsletter *The Week* in the 1930s as counterbalance to the awful mainstream coverage. From Europe I'd already been writing for Kopkind and Ridgeway's *Hard Times* and also for *Ramparts*, respectively a newsletter and a monthly founded—like much of the old underground press—to compensate for the ghastly mainstream coverage of the upheavals of the '60s and the Vietnam War.

In other words, any exacting assessment of the actual performance of newspapers rated against the twaddle about the role of the Fourth Estate spouted by publishers and editors at their annual conventions would be a negative verdict in every era. Of course, there have been moments when a newspaper or a reporter could make fair claims to have done a decent job, inevitably eradicated by a panicky proprietor, a change in ownership, advertiser pressure, eviction of some protective editor or summary firing of the enterprising reporter. By and large, down the decades, the mainstream newspapers have—often rabidly—obstructed and sabotaged efforts to improve our social and political condition.

In an earlier time writers like Mencken and Hecht and Liebling loved newspapers, but the portentous claims for their indispensable role would have made them hoot with derision, as they did the columnist Bernard Levin, decrying in the *Times* of London at the start of the 1980s the notion of a "responsible press": "we are, and must remain, vagabonds and outlaws, for only by so remaining shall we be able to keep the faith by which we live, which is the pursuit of knowledge that others would like unpursued, and the making of comment that others would prefer unmade."

But, of course, most publishers and journalists are not vagabonds and outlaws, any more than are the profs at journalism schools or the jurors and "boards" servicing the racket known as the Pulitzer industry. What the publishers were after was a 20 percent rate of return, a desire that prompts great respect for "the rule of law," if such laws assist in the achievement of that goal. In 1970 this meant coercing Congress to pass the Newspaper Preservation Act of 1970, exempting newspapers from antitrust sanctions against price fixing in a given market. Nixon signed the law and was duly rewarded with profuse editorial endorsements in 1972.

The early and mid-1970s saw a brief flare-up of investigative zeal. But not long after Nixon had been sent packing, Katharine Graham, boss of the Washington Post Company, used the occasion of the annual meeting of the Newspaper Publishers Association to issue a public warning to reporters not to get any uppity ideas about shining too intrusive a searchlight on the way the system works: "The press these days should…be rather careful about its role.… We had better not yield to the temptation to…see conspiracy and cover-up where they do not exist." As Jeffrey St. Clair and I pointed out in our prophetic *End Times: The Death of the Fourth Estate*, citing this speech, who wanted ugly talk about conspiracy and cover-up when there were broadcasting licenses to be OK'd by the FCC?

South of me in Mendocino County, California, is the *Anderson Valley Advertiser*, a weekly edited by my friend Bruce Anderson. I've written a column for it for more than twenty years. The *AVA* does everything a newspaper should do. It covers the county board of supervisors, the court system, the cops, water issues, the marijuana industry. It's fun to read and reminds people of what a real newspaper should be, which is why half its circulation is outside the county, often on the other end of the United States. The *AVA*'s masthead motto: Joseph Pulitzer's "A newspaper should have no friends."

I asked Bruce, "Do you like these bailout ideas?" "No, I don't," he said. "I don't even want them to rest in peace. Why? They don't do any local reporting and haven't for about twenty-five years. I'm talking here about the Santa Rosa *Press Democrat*, owned by the New York Times Company, and the *San Francisco Chronicle*.

"With the drought upon us here on the North Coast the *Press Democrat* has yet to run a coherent account of how precarious our water supplies and delivery systems are. Why? They might get objections from the building industry and the wine industry, on which they're almost totally dependent for advertising these days.

"They don't cover the way the place is run and for whom it's run. That is, the board of supervisors, the boards of education, the water districts—all of which we regularly cover with a staff, too. The *Chronicle* no longer serves any function. It's a museum running reprints of Herb Caen and Art Hoppe."

Does this remind you of a paper near you? Weep not for yesterday's papers, for the old Fourth Estate. At almost every critical hour, in every decade, it failed us. ■

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# Katha Pollitt

## Unnatural Born Killer

On May 6 Johanna Justin-Jinich, a Wesleyan University student, was gunned down in the school's bookstore, almost certainly by 29-year-old Stephen Morgan. My daughter is a senior at Wesleyan, and so I got to see part of the aftermath close up: young people stunned, scared, in tears, confined to their rooms because Morgan was still loose. News accounts make Justin-Jinich seem outstanding in many ways: altruistic, brilliant, full of life, much loved. But in one way, she was far from unusual. She was a woman killed by a man because she was a woman.

We are so used to violence against women we don't even notice how used to it we are. When we're not persuading ourselves that women are just as violent toward men as vice versa if you forget about who ends up seriously injured or dead, or pointing out that most murders are of men by men, we persuade ourselves that violence against women just comes up out of nowhere. Murder is serious, especially if the victim is young, white, middle-class, pretty; harassment, abuse, domestic violence, even rape, not so much. After all, as I'm writing, I read that Houston, taking a leaf from Sarah Palin's Wasilla, is requiring rape victims to pay for the processing of their rape kits. Los Angeles has a backlog of 12,669 unprocessed rape kits, some so old the crimes have exceeded the statute of limitations. It's controversial to even use terms like "misogyny" and "male privilege" to explain the prevalence of these crimes and the shameful inadequacy of our social and legal response to them. And if you *really* want to be branded a square and a prude, try talking about the hatred and contempt for, and objectification of, women that permeates pop culture.

Before Morgan allegedly murdered Justin-Jinich, he stalked her. After the two took the same summer course at NYU in 2007, he made repeated "unwanted" "insulting" phone calls and sent her thirty-eight hostile e-mails ("You're going to have a lot more problems down the road if you can't take any [*expletive*] criticism, Johanna"—a threat that has "I deserve to control and punish you, bitch" written all over it). The story gets a little unclear here: Justin-Jinich went to campus authorities, who referred her to the police, but like most victims, she declined to prosecute, and Morgan left town before he could be served with an order of protection. So, a situation important enough to warrant at least some legal intervention just vanished when the stalker moved away. "There was no way to foresee the sudden, nightmarish sequel," writes Robert McFadden in the *New York Times*. Really?

Stalking is a serious crime and a common one. According to a 2009 Bureau of Justice Statistics report, about 3.4 million people, 74 percent of them female, said they had been stalked in a single year. Being stalked can derail a life: victims not only live in fear, they can lose their job, be forced to drop out or change schools, move. Not all stalkers become killers, of course, but some do. Seung Hui-Cho stalked two women before he went on to massacre thirty-two people at Virginia Tech. Moreover, killing a woman can be just the first step in larger plans of mayhem. It's quite striking, actually, how many mass murderers—almost always men—begin their sprees by killing their wife, ex-wife (as in Corvino, California), girlfriend or even their mother, as one man did in Samson, Alabama; rage at an impending divorce is a popular motive in courtroom attacks, as in a 2005 case in Atlanta. Morgan's diary detailed his plans to follow up by murdering Jews and shooting up the Wesleyan campus.

Violence against women isn't the only blind spot in this case. For many reasons—from family denial to fears of Big Brother—America doesn't deal well with people who have mental or emotional problems. Stephen Morgan, who came from a well-off family in Marblehead, Massachusetts, was weird for a long time. He had no friends at St. John's Preparatory School, where a classmate described him as a "creepy loner," or in the Navy, where he spent four years. After his honorable discharge in 2003, he barraged one fellow seaman with crazy, angry phone calls. The police advised this victim to change his phone number; the calls stopped; that was that. Morgan was an anti-Semite; he refused to sell his house to a Vietnamese couple; he doesn't seem to have had a steady job, a social circle, roots, plans or interests. His family must have been worried about him, but so far as we know, nobody got him psychiatric care.

Of course mental health treatment is not a panacea, but don't you wonder what would have happened if somewhere along the way Morgan had gotten some help? He wasn't living on a desert island; many, many people experienced his strange vibes and their effects, including some who could have pushed him toward treatment but didn't. For eight years of his life he was either in high school or the Navy—did either institution say to him, "You need therapy"? Our frayed and underfunded mental health system shows how little we expect from care: the National Alliance on Mental Illness calls our system "disastrous" and gives it a D. State after state has cut its mental-healthcare budget in recent years, including Massachusetts, where Morgan was living at home before taking his Czech-made 9-millimeter semiautomatic pistol from the box under his bed and setting out to kill Justin-Jinich.

Oh right, guns. The other boring, predictable part of the story. We've rather given up on gun control, haven't we? You know the line: the passion's on the other side, NRA, big political boner-killer for the Democrats, won't make much difference anyway. The Million Mom March is *so* 2000. Results: in 2006, the most recent year for which there are statistics, 30,896 people died from gun violence—including 12,791 murders—and 14,678 were injured.

A woman-obsessed stalker with a mind full of hate who gets his hands on a gun. No, there's no way anyone could have foreseen that he would kill, is there? ■

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COURTESY OF MICHAEL UNDERHILL

UAW workers and supporters at a rally to save the Chrysler engine plant in Kenosha, Wisconsin, May 4

# The Case for Kenosha

Auto bailouts may protect the car companies, but what about their workers?

**by JOHN NICHOLS**

Down the hall from the marble plaque celebrating the commitment of a Midwestern union local to the freedom struggle of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., past the collages made by the children and grandchildren of proud blue-collar families highlighting more than a century of carmaking in their community, next to the posters celebrating the election of Barack Obama, a woman wearing a Yes We Did! T-shirt hands white postcards to the hundreds of shellshocked workers who pour into the United Auto Workers (UAW) Local 72 hall on the north side of Kenosha, Wisconsin.

Less than a week earlier, on April 29, the same workers had gathered at the same hall to cast 89 percent of their votes for a package of pay and benefits cuts that they were promised would "keep manufacturing jobs here in the United States." Within hours of the vote, Chrysler was forced into bankruptcy proceedings that were portrayed by Obama as a painful but necessary step to give the company "a new lease on life." Then, in bankruptcy documents describing "the new Chrysler," came the news: the company, which had already accepted more than $4 billion in federal loans and which was maneuvering to collect $6 billion more, is preparing to use this largesse to jettison the Kenosha plant and seven others while ramping up production in Mexico.

The white cards spell out the plight and the hope of more than 800 workers and their families in Kenosha, a Lake Michigan waterfront city that started making cars during the presidency of Teddy Roosevelt. "Dear President Obama," they read, "I call on you today to intervene to save the Chrysler Kenosha Engine Plant.... It would be a betrayal of your goal of investing in America if Chrysler is allowed to close the Kenosha plant and import the very same engine from Mexico."

"I've got to get a card!" shouts Jenn Jackson, an elected county supervisor who is a stalwart of the local Democratic Party, as she nudges past folks carrying handmade Save Kenosha signs. "We've got to get a message to our president about this. I don't think he understands what is at stake."

Getting a clear read on the extent to which Obama understands what is at stake in Kenosha, and the extent to which he might be willing to intervene to avert a plant closure in this auto town, will go a long way toward answering questions about the administration's commitment to save the struggling auto industry. The ongoing effort to restructure Chrysler has served as a precursor of the bigger fight over the future of General Motors, the battered behemoth of American manufacturing that has already collected $15.4 billion in federal loans but is still losing $113 million a day. GM faces a June 1 deadline to present the administration with a restructuring plan that cuts costs and reduces debt in return for more federal support. There are already strong indications that GM will follow Chrysler's lead by shutting plants and laying off US workers while using bailout bucks to shift even more production to foreign plants. With "fixes" like these, it's tough to imagine how Obama plans to fulfill his campaign promise to "revive and strengthen all of American manufacturing."

Since his election last fall, the president has taken workers in Kenosha and other auto towns across the Great Lakes states on a wild ride. Elected with the highest levels of support accorded

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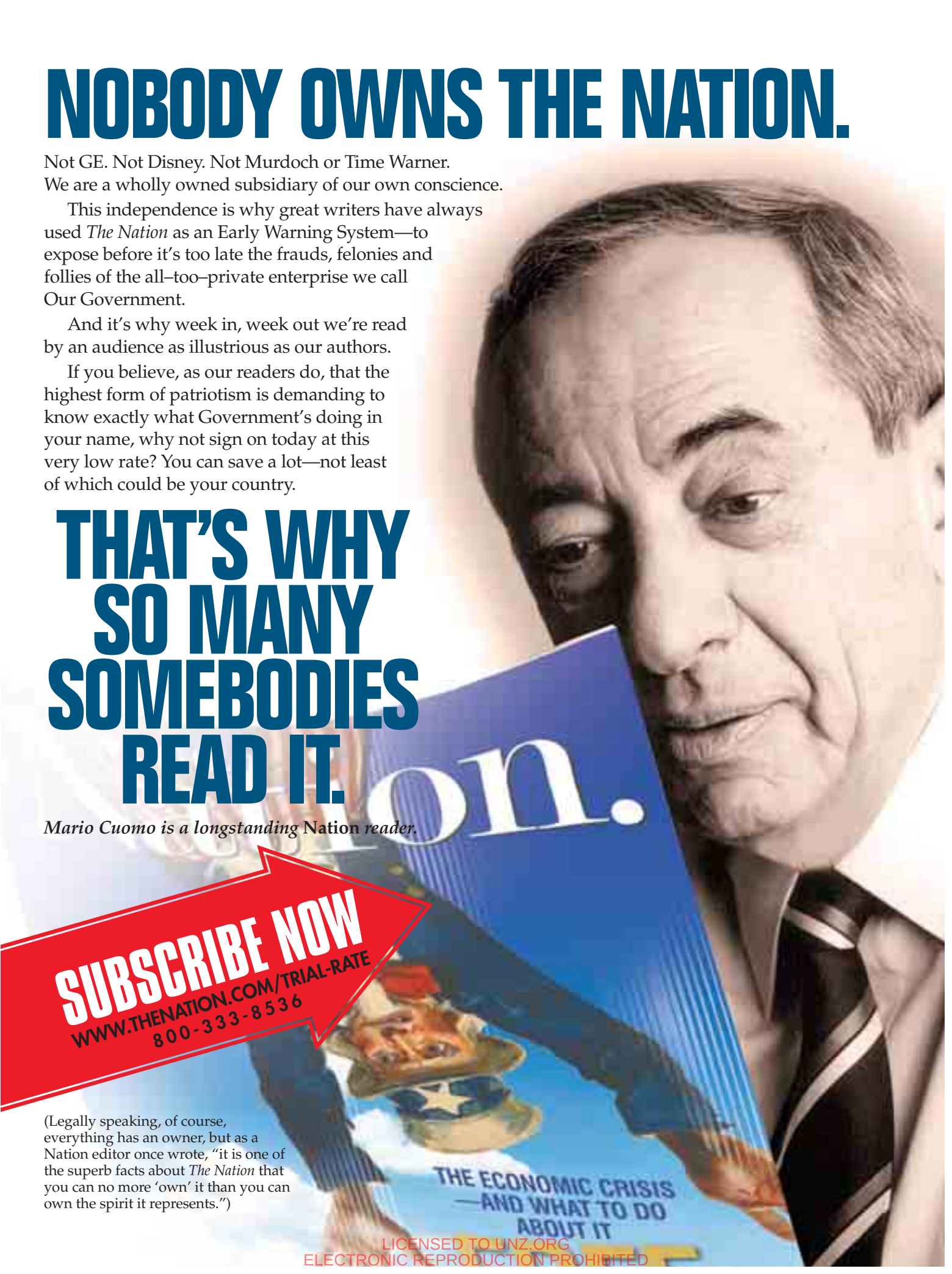


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any Democratic presidential contender in decades by the working families of Midwestern battleground states, Obama headed to the White House promising to tip the balance away from Wall Street and toward Main Street. UAW members took that commitment personally. Their industry had shed 300,000 jobs during George Bush's presidency, the result of a toxic combination of free-trade policies; poor planning and absurd choices by corporate managers; skyrocketing healthcare and pension costs; and a scorching credit crunch. Factory shutdowns and layoffs made the recession a painful reality in the industrial heartland long before it touched most of the rest of the country. The unemployment rate in Kenosha, for example, moved into double digits months ago.

If Republicans got the blame for hard times, however, Democrats were saddled with the expectation that they would deliver a turnaround. "Bush was the bankers' president," explains Bill Cobb, a 65-year-old Kenoshan who has adjusted to the downturn by delivering pizzas. "Obama's our president." But even as Obama was preparing to take office, he surrounded himself with economic advisers who seemed at best disconnected from industrial America. Oregon Democratic Congressman Pete DeFazio says the president picked economists who were "very much part of creating the problem." Instead of responding to the recession with an infrastructure-investment and productivity-driven recovery plan, DeFazio complains, the president's team kept allocating money for banks and insurance giants while manufacturing industries ground to a halt. The administration's auto industry task force does include a few members who should "get it" regarding the need to revitalize American manufacturing—particularly economist Jared Bernstein, formerly of the worker-friendly Economic Policy Institute, and Ron Bloom, who boasts unique experience as both a former investment banker and special assistant to the head of the United Steelworkers union. But with Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner and National Economic Council director Lawrence Summers serving as co-chairs—and financier Steven Rattner as "auto czar"—there is no question that it's the Wall Streeters who dominate the task force. Joel Kotkin, a presidential fellow in urban futures at Chapman University, notes, "Very few Obama appointees have ties to the country's core productive sectors: manufacturing, agriculture, energy. Veterans of investment banking, academia or the public sector, they seem to see the economy more in terms of making media, images and trades—as opposed to actually making *things*."

Obama appeared to follow the Bush administration's lead at first, focusing on bailing out banks while tossing bones—enough money to avoid collapse but no more—to the auto industry. Finally, as winter turned into spring, the White House told the auto companies that Chrysler and General Motors would have to radically remake themselves if they wanted to continue receiving government support. It's not that the demand for reorganization was unreasonable; just about everyone agrees that US auto companies have been miserably managed for decades. What was unsettling was the recognition that while banks and insurance conglomerates are seen as "too big to fail," the auto industry is not similarly treasured. The kid-glove treatment accorded Wall Street was replaced by the hard line of an administration that seems, Kotkin warns, "if not openly anti-industrial" then at the very least "anxious to embrace a decidedly postindustrial future."

That dark assessment will be put to the test in Kenosha. More than in most plant-closing battles in recent history, this one is the canary in the coal mine. What happens in Kenosha may foretell the fate not just of its workers, and not just of Chrysler, but of the auto industry as a whole. "If we can't save an engine plant that has won all the awards for quality and efficiency, that has been modernized and supported by the city and the state, that has workers who have been willing to cut their pay and benefits and change their work rules in order to keep the work here, what auto plant are you going to save?" asks Rudy Kuzel, a longtime worker on the line in the Kenosha plant who in the 1980s and early '90s served as the president of Local 72. "The government's coming in, saying we have to shape these companies up and providing the money to do it. That's good. That's what we want. But if the companies use the government support, the tax money, to shut factories and move the jobs out of the country, what are we saving? The company name?"

The company name doesn't mean much to Kenoshans.

**There are strong indications that GM and Chrysler will shut many domestic plants and use federal loans to shift production overseas.**

They've called their auto plant by many names since 1900, when Thomas Jeffery bought a bicycle factory on the waterfront and later started mass-producing vehicles with two groundbreaking innovations: steering wheels and front-mounted engines. Historians say it was in Kenosha, not Detroit, that cars began "to look like cars." Those small, inexpensive, sometimes homely vehicles, known as Ramblers but jokingly referred to as Kenosha Cadillacs, were made by the Thomas B. Jeffery Company, then by Nash Motors, the Nash-Kelvinator Company and the American Motors Company, which George Romney (Mitt's dad) made an American success story. AMC partnered with the French firm Renault to pioneer production of fuel-efficient cars in the 1970s and eventually sold out to Chrysler in 1987.

Through most of the past century, the constant in Kenosha has been not a particular company but the union. Already organized with the American Federation of Labor when the founding convention of the UAW was held in 1935, Kenosha's Local 72 has been at the heart of the UAW ever since—and the UAW has been at the heart of a community that still proudly calls itself a "labor town." The union's passion preserved Chrysler's presence in the city in the late 1980s, when Local 72 members, working with the Rev. Jesse Jackson and other national activists, battled plans to shutter the plant. Gone are the days when more than 16,000 families took home AMC checks, but the 800 families who work for Chrysler still pump more than $50 million annually into the local economy. And Local 72 remains an essential

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player in Kenosha politics. Obama was just the latest politician to covet, and eventually benefit from, the UAW endorsement in this tightknit town of 90,000.

Now Local 72's future rests with Obama. Even before the president took office, Chrysler collected a $4 billion federal loan (compared with $12 billion for much larger GM) as part of the initial auto bailout. But no one thought that would be enough. Chrysler, with 54,000 employees worldwide, spent the first four months of Obama's presidency teetering on the brink of bankruptcy. The administration promised more money but only if Chrysler's lenders agreed to slash nearly $7 billion in secured debt. The four big banks that held 70 percent of the debt agreed to erase it for $2 billion, but a group of hedge funds that control roughly 30 percent of the debt held out for more money.

At the behest of the administration, Chrysler went into bankruptcy to force the hand of the hedge fund managers and clear the way for an alliance with Italian automaker Fiat. "No one should be confused about what a bankruptcy process means," Obama said. "This is not a sign of weakness but rather one more step on a clearly charted path to Chrysler's revival." Initial media reports even suggested that workers would have a real say in the direction of the new company, although that assessment proved to be overblown. A UAW-aligned healthcare trust fund will technically have a majority stake—in recognition of healthcare and pension concessions made by the union—but that does not translate into actual control. The prime movers will be Fiat chief executive Sergio Marchionne, a dynamic figure who promises fuel-efficient technology, cooler cars and better management, and the US government, which is offering as much as $6 billion in additional loans to the new company.

That money is the key to Kenosha's future, and to that of nearly two dozen Midwestern auto towns. The industry's instability has shaken the Great Lakes region, creating some of the highest unemployment figures since the Great Depression. Yet the strings that have been attached to the bailouts seem to favor downsizing-obsessed managers and foreign investors looking for cheap entry into the US market.

Obama makes a point of saying he does not want to "run" car companies. "The sooner we can get out of that business, the better off we're going to be," he argues. Unfortunately, if the government simply throws money at manufacturing firms and walks away, there are no guarantees that even the most skilled workers will keep their jobs or that their industry will make its future in the United States.

That became evident when Chrysler's lawyers filed the bankruptcy paperwork in which officials proposed to sell off—or, in all probability, close—eight Midwestern factories, including the Kenosha plant. An argument will be made that some of these plants are aging and are not on line to manufacture new or essential products. But if this country is ever going to get serious about building a green economy, the best place to start is with the efficient plants and well-trained workforces of the Big Three. And the Kenosha plant was poised to be a lead facility in Chrysler's effort to produce advanced, fuel-efficient engines.

"We've had hundreds of millions of dollars invested since 2000 to modernize this plant. We have new machinery. We have workers who were pioneers in team-based production and have been getting ready to produce the next generation of engines," says Local 72 president Glenn Stark. In 2007, when Chrysler negotiated more flexible work rules at the plant in return for a promise to produce the company's new six-cylinder engine in Kenosha, Local 72 members agreed. "We knew Chrysler was having a hard time. We made sacrifices to help the company," explained Stark. "Now Chrysler's reorganizing. It's finally got some money, thanks to President Obama, and we're as ready as any plant in the country to move into this new era. But they're telling us the Phoenix isn't coming here."

Where is that new engine going to be produced? Some will be made at a Chrysler facility in Trenton, Michigan. The rest will be produced at a plant under construction in Saltillo, Mexico, where wage-and-benefits demands are dramatically lower. GM has similar plans; the company circulated an outline for restructuring that would nearly double the proportion of GM cars sold in the United States but produced at plants outside the country.

If the government simply throws money at manufacturing firms and walks away, there are no guarantees that workers will keep their jobs.

You don't want to get UAW members started on NAFTA and the complicated web of trade policies that have devastated their industry. These workers are not naïve; they know that autos and auto parts are produced in Mexico, and that this will continue to be the case. But what they can't figure out, says John Drew, a former Chrysler employee who works for the UAW, is why, with the government preparing to spend billions of dollars to save the auto industry, Chrysler is preparing to abandon a high-performing US engine plant and move the work to another country. That's not just a betrayal of American autoworkers, says Drew. "That's a betrayal of American taxpayers."

Drew is onto something. Washington began spending trillions of taxpayer dollars under Bush to save the economy and has continued to do so under Obama. But even the most ham-handed of these interventions involve policy choices: Wall Street versus Main Street, firms seen as "too big to fail" versus those that are not so graced, old economy versus new. No one really expected Bush to "get it," let alone to do the right thing. But Obama, the former community organizer who campaigned in auto plants as he sought the presidency, is supposed to be different. He has spoken well and wisely about how "the fight for American manufacturing is the fight for America's future." But how can US manufacturing survive when Obama agrees to cut loose billions of dollars and then muses, "I don't think that we should micro-manage" the corporations that collect that money?

The president may not be able to save every auto plant and every job. But if he can't save plants like the one in Kenosha—or, more precisely, if he will not choose to save them—then he will be signaling that his approach is hands-on when it comes to

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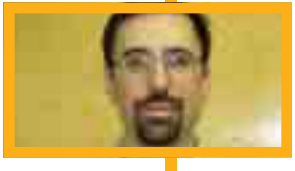
## Andrew Stettner

Deputy Director, National Employment Law Project (New York, NY)
William Bass Award



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writing bailout checks but hands-off when it comes to what is done with them. That signal would be a dark and dangerous one, not merely for those who may cling to pieces of the old economy but for those who imagine that a new economy will provide manufacturing jobs and the family-supporting pay and benefits that have traditionally gone with them. On the other hand, if Obama and his team signal that government investment must yield tangible and smart results—factories saved, jobs retained and industries retooled—then he will begin outlining a policy for keeping the auto industry viable and, more generally, for ensuring the future of American manufacturing.

As Kuzel speaks, workers and their families rally to save their plant. A little boy waves a sign that asks, WHERE WILL I WORK WHEN I GROW UP?

"People may think this is just about Kenosha or the UAW. But *that's* what it's really about," says Kuzel, motioning toward the sign. "We're about to decide where America's going to work when it grows up." ■

# Time for Another Reuther Plan

Autoworkers should confront this crisis as they would have in the past: boldly and visibly.

**by NELSON LICHTENSTEIN**

The crisis in the American auto industry marks a decisive turning point for the nation's manufacturing economy. During the past three decades of global overcapacity, Detroit's Big Three, the backbone of US manufacturing, have stumbled through intense international competition by periodically shuttering factories; squeezing the pay and benefits of their workers; and every so often getting a quick fix from the sale of gas-guzzling SUVs, minivans and big pickups.

PETER O. ZIERLEIN

But time has run out. Once the dust clears it seems certain that Chrysler and General Motors will be radically downsized: at least a third smaller, with fewer workers and brands and a dealer network slashed by as much as 40 percent. Most remarkably, these two companies, once in first and fifth place on *Fortune*'s list of the 500 largest, will have ceded a big slice of their ownership to the United Automobile Workers and the Treasury.

Under the latest iteration of the GM restructuring deal, the Treasury will own 50 percent of the company and the UAW will own another 39 percent through its healthcare trust. Chrysler will be merged into Fiat, but the government and the union will also take large stakes in the company as they swap debt or healthcare payments for equity.

Given all this drama, the UAW has been strangely silent. Who has heard of Ron Gettelfinger, its president? He has been playing back-room hardball to fend off efforts by Republicans, bondholders and some in the Treasury to slash union jobs and wages. But none of his efforts have amounted to a program that could rally the country on behalf of the UAW and the rest of the union movement.

History, Mark Twain is credited with saying, never repeats itself, but sometimes it rhymes. If we revisit another moment of crisis in the auto industry, perhaps we can catch some of that social and economic poetry. In the mid-twentieth century, the UAW was a far larger and more powerful organization led by men and women of vast ambition and limitless imagination. C. Wright Mills described it as a "'Grass Roots' Union With Ideas," a political and economic formation that Walter Reuther, its legendary president, called "the vanguard in America," "the architects of the future." If contemporary progressives and the beleaguered UAW look back at the ambitions of Reuther and the autoworkers of his era, we might find the inspiration and ideas to reshape the bailout and bankruptcy agenda, to build a new vision for the nation's manufacturing and the millions who labor in American factories and mills.

Reuther was just 33 in 1940, but he was already a union official and the leader of 200,000 workers who labored at GM, an enterprise that *Fortune* identified as "the world's most influential industrial unit in forming the life patterns of the machine age." During World War II the company would account for 10 percent of the nation's manufacturing capacity; Detroit was then the fourth-largest city in the country, an industrial dynamo where just about every blue-collar worker sported a union button. The shuttered factories and derelict neighborhoods that today exemplify Detroit's decline also measure the shrinkage in UAW ranks, which have been slashed from more than 1.5 million more than thirty years ago to about 430,000 active workers at the end of 2008. (It is important to note that the American auto industry is not dead: there are still almost a million workers, most nonunion and poorly paid, who design, forge, build, assemble, ship and service the 15 million cars and trucks normally sold each year in the United States.)

Although the automobile industry was making money in 1940, it faced a crucial challenge: how to align its profit-making imperative with the crisis-generated needs of the nation. That year the threat came in the skies of southeast England, where the

*Nelson Lichtenstein is the author of* The Retail Revolution: How Wal-Mart Created a Brave New World of Business, *forthcoming in July. He directs the Center for the Study of Work, Labor, and Democracy at the University of California, Santa Barbara.*

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Luftwaffe and the Royal Air Force were engaged in a bloody contest. President Roosevelt had not yet committed the nation to warfare against the Nazis, but he famously pledged to make the United States an arsenal of democracy with the aim of turning out 50,000 airplanes per year, an astounding goal at the time, far more than the entire number of warplanes that existed on the planet. Auto executives did not want to cooperate; they were finally making money turning out passenger cars after a decade of the Depression. If FDR and the New Dealers wanted warplanes, Detroit would help build them, but only in factories as yet unconstructed with machines still unordered and with newly hired, untrained workers.

This was the crisis in which Reuther stepped forward with a dramatic plan to help advance the war effort. Despite opposition from auto executives (who saw his plan as another effort to erode managerial power) and the communists and old-line conservatives within the labor movement (who saw it as a form of class collaboration), Reuther proposed that the union help build 500 planes a day on Detroit's existing assembly lines. Car production would not stop, but idle machinery, skilled labor and factory space would be combined to produce desperately needed fighter planes, regardless of whose corporate balance sheet took the hit.

Today the auto industry is faced with a similar crisis; in order to align its fortunes with the nation's needs once again, it must abandon the high-margin SUVs and minivans in the name of energy security. President Obama wants a greener, leaner auto industry, but he declares that he is not an automobile engineer. So who will do the social engineering necessary to transform this industry? In years past Reuther and the UAW stepped into this vacuum, but any effort to articulate a bold vision for the industry's future has been sadly missing under Gettelfinger; worse, the UAW has often just mimicked the views of the auto executives. If the UAW hopes to emerge from the current negotiations in anything other than survival mode, it must align its cause with the millions of liberals who side with Obama and explain why a new era of social and economic transformation is needed to get the auto industry back on its feet. For example, the UAW could forge a high-profile alliance with environmental groups to demand higher fuel standards, and it could insist that all companies receiving government funds create or save jobs through temporary work-sharing arrangements negotiated either by the union or by new workplace committees set up in each factory. Most important, the unions and their supporters need to act boldly and visibly.

Gettelfinger need not look all the way back to 1940 to glimpse what a bold UAW plan might look like. The Reuther Plan of that pre–Pearl Harbor year proved to be a template for decades of UAW bargaining with the auto companies and the government. In the mid-twentieth century the UAW was indeed in the vanguard, with the ambition to leverage its power on behalf of a progressive vision for all working Americans. The reason labor was a powerfully attractive political force in the 1940s and for much of the generation afterward was not just that it had muscle and members but that unions, the UAW above all, had ideas about how to run the companies and industries with which they bargained, linking working-class welfare to a progressive conception of the national interest. Thus in 1945 Reuther proposed that surplus war factories be converted to make houses and rail cars. He led a 113-day strike against GM in the winter of 1945–46, not just for a substantial wage increase but for a lid on the price of the new cars for which the public was clamoring. Two years later the UAW published a pamphlet, "A Small Car Named Desire," urging Detroit to build cheap, Volkswagen-like compact cars. In the 1950s the UAW used its bargaining leverage to try to get the auto companies to support a higher level of Social Security benefits, national health insurance, profit sharing and "steady-state" auto production that would avoid the usual boom-and-bust cycle.

This pattern continued after Reuther's death in 1970, even in the years when the auto industry faced turmoil and competition. During the 1979–81 financial crisis at Chrysler, when the firm got a government loan guarantee, the UAW agreed to a series of painful wage concessions, but the union also persuaded Chrysler president Lee Iacocca to put UAW president Douglas Fraser on the company's board. And when the Japanese and German auto companies began to take market share from the Big Three in the early 1980s, the UAW proved instrumental in pushing Congress to pass legislation that encouraged the construction of a generation of foreign transplants—which the UAW hoped, vainly as it turned out, would be unionized. Even the much-maligned job bank, which still offers regular pay to 12,000 autoworkers for idle days at the factory, was the productivity-sharing price the UAW forced Detroit to pay in the 1980s, when the industry sought to shut factories, slash payrolls and generate a more "flexible" workplace.

**If progressives and the beleaguered UAW look to the union's storied past, they may find the inspiration and ideas to reshape the bailouts.**

The UAW could not do all of this alone. It faced disaffection from a new generation of liberals who disdained organized labor; competition from lower-wage, nonunion rivals; and increasingly adamant resistance from Detroit executive suites. Sophisticated corporate executives like Charles Wilson and Henry Ford II made a long and largely successful effort not only to protect management power but to keep the government out of their business and align UAW interests with those of the auto companies. Thus, when the union demanded price controls to stanch postwar inflation, GM countered with a quarterly cost-of-living adjustment that for decades kept auto wages abreast of inflation, even before negotiations started on an additional wage increase. Likewise, when the UAW and other unions sought a national health insurance program and a boost in Social Security benefits, GM and Ford took the lead in putting their own company-specific plans on the table.

The UAW called the plans inadequate, fought to improve

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them and sometimes even struck and won. But the net result was a sort of private welfare state for one industry. Charles Wilson was satisfied. "Both the union and we get the things the country, the company and the union need: high discipline, high productivity, high wages and high employment security," he said.

This worked fine until the 1980s. The patterns established in highly unionized industries like auto, steel and trucking soon spread to millions of other workers, even those employed by nonunion firms whose management sought to keep them that way. Real wages in the United States rose for two postwar generations, and the proportion of workers covered by private pensions and receiving company-paid health insurance peaked in the late 1970s.

Since then the system has begun to unravel, and with it the spirit and ideas that once animated the UAW. Solidarity wages are a thing of the distant past. GM, Toyota and every other automaker depend on a desperate stratum of low-wage suppliers to keep their assembly lines humming. And the private welfare state, which the Big Three once gladly saw as an alternative to an expansive New Deal, is now a crushing burden, a "legacy cost" that has to be offloaded onto the taxpayers, the retirees or the few remaining workers. Indeed, these are the costs that make up the bulk of the wage differential between the transplants and the Detroit-headquartered producers. Domestic car companies have more than 775,000 retirees and surviving spouses, while all foreign automakers in the United States support a total of 5,000 pensioners. No wonder that legacy costs amount to more than $16 an hour at Ford, compared with $3 an hour at Toyota.

The collapse of the auto industry has been so dramatic and so radical that GM has been forced to abandon just about every managerial prerogative for which it fought so long and hard. Obama wants CEO Rick Wagoner to resign, and he is gone. Treasury tells Chrysler to merge, and on what terms, and Fiat takes over. Indeed, with the government and the union owning nearly 90 percent of GM common stock, it is time to think boldly and progressively about how to restructure some of America's greatest manufacturing companies. They are far too important to be left in the hands of a generation of discredited managers and Wall Street speculators. So let's make history rhyme. It is time to dust off and update some of those Reuther plans in order to put labor's voice and the people's interest to work rebuilding an industry that might once again become a democratic arsenal. ■

# Who's Afraid of Industrial Policy?

We shouldn't pass up this chance to enlist the domestic auto industry in a green transition.

**by MAX FRASER**

When President Obama announced Chrysler's bankruptcy filing, on April 30, as "one more step on a clearly charted path to Chrysler's revival," even the most Pollyannaish of observers must have done a double take. Plagued by years of declining international competitiveness and now the worst economic downturn in three-quarters of a century, Chrysler, General Motors and even the temporarily healthy Ford have no clear path to recovery. And with much of the public discussion about how to "save" the industry focused on slashing workforces, eliminating surplus productive capacity and ditching obligations to current and retired employees, one could hardly expect autoworkers to share the president's optimism. "Our marching orders were to do both Chrysler and GM the way we would do a strictly commercial deal," an unnamed member of the Treasury Department's Auto Task Force told the *New York Times*, with the martial tone and menacing verb "do" sounding an awful lot like they were borrowed from Jack Welch's lean-and-mean corporate playbook of the 1980s.

PETER O. ZIERLEIN

As the once-mighty United Auto Workers swallowed concession after concession, UAW president Ron Gettelfinger tried to sweeten the bitter pill with promises that the union would be around to "fight another day." But the obvious question remained unanswered: fight for what, exactly? For the labor movement and the left, the answer is critical. If crisis breeds opportunity, then there has rarely been a better moment to tie the future of the domestic auto industry to the imperative of building a green economy. We need a bold industrial policy aimed at bridging the gap between older industries and emerging ones, revitalizing the moribund manufacturing sector, supporting an economy based on high-wage union jobs and attending to the crucial climate concerns that impact us all.

Though Obama has been visionary in his rhetoric about building a future around clean energy and green jobs, his administration has stopped far short of embracing such an agenda in response to the collapse of the auto industry. There are many reasons for this, but perhaps most salient among them is the persistent grip of a free-market ideology that has made the very idea of a national industrial policy infeasible (if not vaguely treasonous) for much of the past half-century. While not hardline free-market dogmatists, Obama's closest advisers are proponents

*Max Fraser is a writer and the director of* The Nation*'s journalism internship program.*

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The challenge Professor Fears poses, to seek such stimulation and examine history closely, is especially pertinent during the "ahistorical age" he says we live in—an era when too many people are willing to invest in a "dangerous delusion" that "science, technology, the global economy, and the information superhighway all make us immune to the lessons of history," and that "in an age of global economy, war and tyranny will become things of the past."

### About Your Professor

Professor J. Rufus Fears is David Ross Boyd Professor of Classics at the University of Oklahoma. He earned his Ph.D. from Harvard University and has written four books and more than 100 articles and reviews. Professor Fears has been recognized for outstanding teaching on 24 occasions. In 2006, the Oklahoma Foundation for Excellence awarded him its medal for Excellence in College and University Teaching.

Courtesy National Archives.

George Washington led the fledgling United States through a time of crisis.

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of behavioral economics, which envisions a world of mostly free markets that require only minimal government interference to avoid crises and provide people and industries with helpful "nudges" (a favored phrase in behaviorist parlance).

That ideological bias has been much in evidence in the government's approach to dealing with Chrysler and GM. The Obama administration made clear it wanted no direct role in overseeing the two companies, instead offering them incentives to transition into making more fuel-efficient cars that can compete globally while doing less harm to the environment. The administration even went so far as to "nudge" Chrysler into a merger with the Italian automaker Fiat, the success of which may rest on a forty-mile-per-gallon car that is supposed to be ready in two and a half years. In both cases, the idea is that with a little help from the government, the markets will be able to take care of the rest.

The benefits of developing greener automotive technologies are substantial, and if Chrysler and GM can return to profitability by abandoning inefficient trucks and SUVs, the administration may feel that it has done enough by prodding them in that direction. But a more comprehensive restructuring of the industry will require more than a light hand from the government. Taking fuller advantage of the moment will mean breaking once and for all with the narrow logic of the market, and creating a bigger and more permanent role for the government in revitalizing the industrial economy.

**The idea behind Obama's policy on the auto industry is that with a little help from the government, the markets will take care of the rest.**

Even after decades of downsizing, the auto industry still accounts for 25 percent of US manufacturing output. It provides jobs to about one out of every ten manufacturing workers, either directly or through a chain of parts makers, suppliers and related industries that support local economies in wide swaths of the country beyond Detroit. Says AFL-CIO economist Ron Blackwell, "The auto supply chain is the spine of the country's manufacturing capacity," made up of large firms like Delphi and American Axle, which supply parts directly to Big Three assembly plants, and an intricate network of smaller, highly specialized second- and third-tier components makers that are the often anonymous victims of the auto crisis. "If you let the spine break, then it is going to be all that much more difficult to repair our manufacturing capacity," Blackwell says.

A plan for saving that spine will have to reflect creative thinking about how to preserve the wealth of skilled labor and productive capital that is at risk of disappearing. The Obama administration has made substantial investments in developing the country's neglected public transportation and renewable energy capacity, which could be crucial to the future of domestic manufacturing. During World War II, the Roosevelt administration helped keep workers on the job and factories humming at full capacity by buying tens of thousands of planes and tanks from a quickly retooled auto industry. Today's planes and tanks could be the buses, subway cars, trains and light-rail cars that would spur the development of new systems of mass transit and help shift the country away from its unsustainable carbon dependency.

Robert Pollin, an economist at the University of Massachusetts, points to the $9 billion for public transportation that was included in the stimulus package in February as one way to begin that transition. "Public transportation in most places is terribly inconvenient. Putting in more bus lines is environmentally positive, it creates jobs and it reduces the cost of living for working people. The first thing to do is put more buses on the street, and that could be a major source of expansion for the auto industry over the next three to five years."

There may be even more opportunities in retraining autoworkers and refitting factories for use in renewable energy production, where the United States lags far behind competitors in Europe and Asia. Opinions vary as to whether the existing skills and equipment in the auto industry are a good match with those necessary for renewable energy production, and there are as yet no good data on how easily, say, a transmission plant in Detroit or windshield manufacturer in Toledo could start making solar panels or engines for wind turbines. But letting the opportunity pass would be a costly mistake. "Public transportation and renewable energy products are going to be manufacturing focal points of the next generation of the global economy," says Pollin, "and the US is going to need to devise an industrial policy to become competitive. The notion of the US not having a presence in that market is not good at all."

The upside, meanwhile, may be substantial. In the Great Lakes region, renewable energy development could be crucial to the future of many working-class communities that depend heavily on the auto industry for jobs and local revenues. In Cuyahoga County, Ohio, the Great Lakes Wind Energy Center is studying the feasibility of putting three to seven windmills three miles off the shore of Lake Erie, where reliably strong winds are perfect for energy production. According to George Sterzinger of the Renewable Energy Policy Project, the total offshore wind potential in the Great Lakes is around 250,000 megawatts—about ten times the nation's currently installed offshore capacity—which could generate a huge local industry in wind energy and related manufacturing. "Estimates place the market for offshore wind at $500 billion," Sterzinger says, and if developed it would create an equally large market for component parts like motors, gearboxes and giant blades, much of which could be supplied locally. "Those parts could come from places like Cleveland and Detroit."

To Dianne Feeley, who spent ten years working in an American Axle plant in Detroit, such ideas are hardly farfetched. "Plants shouldn't be allowed to shut down; they should be reorganized," she says. "The kind of restructuring they're talking about now, that's been going on for thirty years, and it's only been successful at reducing the workforce and speeding up the work." When Feeley started at the plant, it employed 2,000

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workers; by this summer there will be fewer than 250. Although she is retired, her frustrations led her to join a group of UAW rank-and-file activists called the Auto Workers Caravan, which has been lobbying Congress to prevent further job cuts and "establish a national industrial policy that will direct, plan and finance the transformation of the auto industry's existing capacity."

This three-pronged approach to protecting autoworkers' jobs—fuel-efficient automotive production, public transportation and renewable energy—can be a model for the green manufacturing economy of the twenty-first century. Much experimentation will be needed to determine the innovation, skill training and capital investment necessary to make these industries competitive. But that's what national industrial policies are designed for—to nurture high-value industries, protect industries from the downward pressure created by global competition and guard against unsustainable trade imbalances, like the one that fueled the American system of debt-financed consumer spending that has plunged the world into recession.

High wages and healthy workers are also essential to any robust manufacturing economy. A new industrial policy should include a healthcare system to free businesses from a significant competitive disadvantage with employers in other industrialized countries, and to protect workers against the sudden disappearance of employer-provided benefits in times of crisis. Likewise, it ought to include a commitment to supporting strong unions—both in older, declining industries and in the new green sectors—which have a stabilizing effect on the overall economy by keeping demand high and productivity steady.

In the end, whether or not the Big Three survive the crisis is less important than making sure that there will be an alternative for the millions of working Americans who still depend on the industry for their livelihoods. "We shouldn't even be talking about saving the auto industry," Feeley says with disdain. "Saving the auto industry won't give us jobs, won't put us on the right track for a climate that we need, won't help our cities. The strategy needs to be about how to save the working class and our communities."

So far, that is not a strategy the Obama administration has rushed to embrace. The more ambitious thinking by Feeley and others has remained largely below the surface in the discussion about what to do with the struggling auto industry. But good ideas often find a way to trickle upward. As the recession continues to demonstrate the costly effects of allowing our once-vital manufacturing economy to wither in the face of global competition, the challenge for the labor movement and the left will be to keep pressing for economic solutions that are driven by what's good for workers and the environment, not for financial markets. We've seen where fifty years without a coherent industrial policy has gotten us; it's time for a new program. ■

# The Secret History of Izzy

I.F. Stone was not only a great reporter; he was above all a radical, an irritant to the powerful.

**by D.D. GUTTENPLAN**

To the *Meet the Press* audience on December 12, 1949, there was nothing special about the confrontation between I.F. Stone and Dr. Morris Fishbein. As editor of the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, Fishbein was a well-known foe of what the AMA called "socialized medicine" in any form; Stone, a sometime member of the *Meet the Press* panel since 1946, could be relied on for provocative and persistent questioning. The country's most influential physician had already denounced national health insurance as "the kind of regimentation that led to totalitarianism in Germany." When Fishbein also condemned compulsory coverage as "socialistic," Stone demonstrated why the show's producers considered him "a good needler": "Dr. Fishbein, let's get nice and rough. In view of his advocacy of compulsory health insurance, do you regard Mr. Harry Truman as a card-bearing communist, or just a deluded fellow traveler?"

PETER O. ZIERLEIN

The arguments over national healthcare may not have advanced much over the next sixty years, but for I.F. Stone that broadcast marked a kind of limit. It would be nearly two decades before Stone, who rose to prominence as a correspondent for this magazine and a columnist for the legendary New York tabloid *PM*, would next appear on national television. He would never be invited back on *Meet the Press*. When, three years later, he found himself in effect blacklisted—not even *The Nation* would give him a job—he started *I.F. Stone's Weekly*, the one-man newspaper that is an inspiration and a challenge to the current generation of bloggers.

To think for yourself is the hardest thing for a journalist to do. I.F. Stone managed to do it, day after day and week after week, for fifty years. He may have been shocked into independent thought—in his case by the Nazi-Soviet Pact, which marked the end of Stone's hopes for a Popular Front embracing communists, Trotskyists, liberals and unaffiliated radicals—but however he began, he retained his independence.

*D.D. Guttenplan is the author of* American Radical: The Life and Times of I.F. Stone *(Farrar, Straus and Giroux), from which this article is excerpted.* *Copyright © 2009 by D.D. Guttenplan.*

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Unlike many of those who would later oppose him from the right, Stone never succumbed to the romance of American communism. But he was terrified by fascism, and he welcomed any ally in the fight against Hitler—even, when Stalin changed sides again, the Soviet Union.

He defied conventional wisdom in urging the left to support Dwight Eisenhower's efforts to extricate the United States from the war in Korea and to avoid entanglement in China and Vietnam, while he despised Richard Nixon, whom he labeled a "slick kind of Arrow-collar-ad" fascist. Yet when President Nixon made his historic opening to China in 1972, Stone—remarking that "there is nothing that a good newspaperman, like any Hegelian or Marxist historian, cannot foresee as inevitable once it has happened"—confessed that he found it "exhilarating to be reminded again how unpredictable human behavior can be." The "Peking-Washington rapprochement," he declared, "is the most startling event of its kind since the Nazi-Soviet Pact."

Along with his independence, Stone's capacity for surprise was one of his greatest assets. "I have never been able to figure out just what not being surprised is supposed to prove," he wrote in 1957 after the Soviet launch of the spacecraft Sputnik stunned the world. "A mummy is immune to surprise." Perhaps it was the memory of his chagrin over the Nazi-Soviet Pact that saved him from the incorrigible smugness endemic among today's punditocracy. Certainly it is difficult to imagine our own Sunday-morning solons so cheerfully acknowledging the inevitability of error and inconsistency: "If you're going to be a newspaperman, you are either going to be honest or consistent," Stone told a young admirer. "If you are really doing your job as an observer…it's more important to say what you see than to worry about inconsistency. If you are worried about that, then you stop looking. And if you stop looking, you are not a real reporter anymore. I have no inhibitions about changing my mind."

Stone remained a real reporter all his life. For him that meant a deeply ingrained skepticism about the claims of power—as in his famous quip, repeated through many variations, that "every government is run by liars." Stone understood that what journalism is really good at is answering empirical questions, and that it demands the skills not of an economist or a philosopher but of a good police reporter. Was there a North Vietnamese attack on the American destroyer Turner Joy in August 1964, or not? Can underground nuclear explosions be detected from more than a hundred miles away? Did the Limited Test Ban Treaty actually reduce the number of tests? These are questions that allow simple, factual answers—though in all three cases his fellow reporters showed little interest in even asking them. As Stone often remarked, one reason that Carl Bernstein and Bob Woodward were able to follow the Watergate story all the way to the Oval Office was that they were working the police beat, not the White House.

"I tried to get my stuff from the horse's mouth—or the other end, at any rate," Stone said near the end of his life. But it would be a mistake to take Stone's modesty at face value, or to miss the immense intellectual confidence behind his passion for getting the facts straight. "The search for meaning is very satisfying, it's very pleasant, but it can be very far from the truth," he warned a pair of student journalists. "You have to have the courage to call attention to what doesn't fit. Even though readers are going to say, 'Well two weeks ago you said this.' So you did. And maybe you were wrong then, or partly wrong, but anyway you've just seen something new that doesn't fit, and it's your job to report it. Otherwise, you're just the prisoner of your own preconceptions." To describe this process of constant adjustment to reality, Stone used a deeply unfashionable word: dialectical.

"A lot of people in this town," he told writer William Greider in April 1988, "thought of me as Karl Marx's baby brother." Stone, like Marx, wrote to change the world. He was also, for all his ink-stained self-deprecation, perfectly at home amid the mainstream of European thought; not for nothing was he invited by Jean-Paul Sartre to write for *Les Temps Modernes*. But Stone's deepest roots were in his native ground: the deceptively plain-spoken sophistication of Benjamin Franklin, the distilled outrage of William Lloyd Garrison, Tom Paine's appeal to revolutionary common sense, the dignity of Frederick Douglass and, above all, Thomas Jefferson's view of a free press as the keystone of American liberty.

Stone remained a real reporter all his life, deeply skeptical about the claims of power. 'Every government is run by liars,' he quipped.

Stone enjoyed the celebrity that came to him at the end of his life. He and his beloved wife, Esther—who met on a blind date on a Philadelphia street corner and who survived the lean years together partly through her genius at running *I.F. Stone's Weekly* on a shoestring and a promise—danced the frug at the Peppermint Lounge, hobnobbed with stars at the Cannes Film Festival and saw the onetime political leper celebrated from Paris to San Francisco. "I told my wife years ago," Stone says in the 1973 film *I.F. Stone's Weekly*, "I said, 'Honey, I'm going to graduate from a pariah to a character, and then if I last long enough I'll be regarded as a national institution.'" He lasted long enough.

Stone's continuing status as a hate figure for the American right was attested in August 2007, when President George W. Bush attacked Stone by name in a speech to the Veterans of Foreign Wars. Recent weeks have similarly seen a desperate, if deluded, attempt to revive the smear that this most independent of American voices was on Moscow's payroll [see Guttenplan, "Red Harvest," May 6]. But it is also true that in the decades since his death, I.F. Stone has indeed become a national institution. Mine is the third biography of Izzy since his death in 1989. In 2006 Peter Osnos, who began his journalistic career as Stone's assistant at the *Weekly* before becoming a foreign correspondent for the *Washington Post* and later the founder of Public Affairs Press, published a selection of Stone's journalism. In July 2008 the Nieman Foundation for

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Journalism at Harvard awarded the first annual I.F. Stone Medal for Journalistic Independence.

Yet for all Stone's fame, his life remains a chapter in the hidden history of the twentieth century. Indeed, it would be only a slight exaggeration to say that it is precisely Stone's status as a kind of journalistic icon that keeps him, like an Egyptian pharaoh, immured in a monument of his own devising. So it is not as clear as it should be that Stone was not merely, or even primarily, a newspaperman. He was also and always a radical, an irritant to those in power—for his uncanny ability to seize on and publicize the most inconvenient truths, and for his vociferous objection to the existing order, his intransigent dissatisfaction with a society that forces its children to go to war in order to pay for college and that allows the earth to be spoiled and the sick to go without medicine so corporations and those who own them can continue to pile up treasure without let or hindrance.

The radical I.F. Stone has as much to tell us as Stone, the patron saint of investigative reporting. His message was unfailingly political.

Izzy was a troublemaker all his life. From his youth as a soapbox orator for the Socialist Party, to his middle-aged mockery of Harry Truman, John Foster Dulles and J. Edgar Hoover, to his dying words in support of the student demonstrators who risked death at Tiananmen Square, he relished a good fight. The list of his causes is a fair index of the rise and fall of American radicalism: equality for African-Americans; government assistance for the poor; economic justice for farm laborers and factory workers; a left united in opposition to fascism (whether the jackbooted European variety or the "chrome-plated American fascism" Stone saw behind the repression of the 1950s); support for colonial independence and opposition to an American empire; industrial democracy and workers' rights; universal healthcare; the abolition of nuclear weapons; justice for Palestinians as well as Israelis; a negotiated end to the cold war; and, most of all, the right to dissent.

As Stone aged, his manners softened. In the tempest of the 1950s, harassed by the State Department, followed by the FBI, blacklisted by the mainstream media and ridiculed by many liberals, Stone refused to trim his sails. But when the storm passed and Stone encountered his former antagonists in more peaceable climes, he was nearly always willing to forgive, if not forget. His geniality and his increasing focus, in his final years, on injustices in the so-called socialist world make it easy to overlook the man who'd proposed a government takeover of the automobile industry to equip the Air Force during the Second World War and who, long before the sit-ins and Freedom Rides, regularly chided African-Americans not for their restiveness but for their patience. The I.F. Stone who wrote scathing critiques of Soviet psychiatry in *The New York Review of Books* gradually eclipsed, if not effaced, the man who denounced American interference in Cuba as criminal and who described the war in Vietnam—"this distant slaughter of a small nation"—not as a heroic crusade, or even a quixotic gesture, but as "genocide."

Perhaps especially today, when a snide tone or a hectoring manner seems to serve as an emblem of commitment, any reader who happens upon Stone's calm, forensic yet devastating critiques of American politics and institutions is likely to be shocked by the depth of his radicalism. Stone was no catastrophist; he didn't yearn for things to get worse in order to get better. He was always happy to support reform whenever reform was possible—and genuine. He cherished the Constitution, felt proprietary pride toward the Bill of Rights and took for granted the necessity for liberals and radicals to work together on common goals as simple Popular Front common sense. Even in the depths of the McCarthy era Stone never lost faith in the long-term prospects for democracy, telling himself, "Well, I may be just a Red Jew son-of-a-bitch to them, but I'm keeping Thomas Jefferson alive."

This radical I.F. Stone has at least as much to tell us as Stone, the patron saint of investigative reporting. If journalism was his medium, his message was unfailingly political. Indeed, it was his immersion in the political battles of his day—his experience of the Depression, CIO-organizing campaigns in the steel and auto industries, the brutal violence of Kentucky coal fields, the promise of the New Deal and the cruel foreclosures of the cold war—that shaped his historical sensibility and lifted his best journalism above the ephemeral score-keeping and score-settling of his long-forgotten rivals.

Shorn of the political engagements, Stone's career is reduced to a kind of performance, like that of a veteran ballplayer or a distinguished actor. And shorn of his history, he becomes merely a figurehead for a set of attitudes or political positions, a way to prop up our prejudices by showing how much his views on any subject resemble our own. So perhaps it is time to stop asking "What would Izzy say?" and consider instead why he still matters.

Stone's ability to continue writing and to remain both radical and independent was a major achievement. In dark times, his life and writings can again serve to remind us that radicalism is as American as the Boston Tea Party, and that we who stood on the side of Daniel Shays, or the abolitionists, or Eugene Debs, or the Wobblies, or Franklin Roosevelt, or the Congress of Industrial Organizations, or Rosa Parks, or Women Strike for Peace, or any of a dozen other causes have at least as much right to call ourselves patriots as those who opposed them. As his critic, competitor and longtime friend Murray Kempton said, "Among its many other uses, Stone's work is a handbook on how to survive as a guerrilla."

And when the tide turns, Stone's career reminds us to seize the day and to focus less on the minor differences of doctrine that may divide us and more on what we can accomplish together. I.F. Stone never forgot the healing impact of the New Deal's flawed and faltering efforts toward economic justice. He never forgot that as well as planting trees, saving banks, taming

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rivers, bringing electricity to the rural South, paving thousands of miles of roads and building hundreds of public structures from amphitheaters to zoos, Roosevelt's bold, persistent experimentation repaired the spirit, building the nation that would go on to defeat fascism. Nor did Stone forget the coalition that pressed the president, and the country, to keep moving left.

When shipyard workers in Gdansk rose up in 1980, Stone was thrilled; he'd been a supporter of the strike at the Cegielski locomotive works in Poznan, in 1956. But he must have been especially pleased by the name the Poles gave to their movement: Solidarity. I.F. Stone knew a lot about solidarity. He'd seen the American left tear itself apart when solidarity gave way to suspicion and recrimination; but he never forgot what solidarity had achieved, either on the line at the Fisher Body plant in Flint, Michigan, or at lunch counters across the South or in demanding an end to the war in Vietnam. It was his memory, and his confidence, as much as his analysis of events, that made a deaf, reedy-voiced, myopic old man such a powerful figure. He was a very great reporter, and like all great reporters a great noticer. Which is our good fortune, because taken together his writings amount to as vivid a record of his times and ours as we are likely to get. ■

# Letters

*(continued from page 2)*

That is the nature of insurance. However, modern medicine deals in large measure with chronic conditions and preventive care, neither of which fits the antiquated "insurance" model. So when a health insurance company knows for sure that you will need care, it withdraws it on the grounds that it is no longer covering risk. That is a perfectly logical system, but it is tragically obsolete.

Michael McCarthy

### Consumer Society Healthcare?

Fort Bragg, Calif.

Why is it that virtually every discussion of healthcare speaks of "insurance," of "coverage"—universal or otherwise? Is this another of the perversions of the "consumer society," the "market economy" that is disintegrating before our eyes? Gone, it seems, is the intrinsic goal of healthcare—to provide ways and means to foster a level of health quality that will permit our citizens to live productive and satisfying lives.

With the energy and funds we expend on balance-sheet accounting we could immensely expand and improve services that prevent diseases; that strengthen infant, child and family health; that implement individual and community health education; that stimulate biomedical research and technological innovation. A bottom-line mentality is antithetical to human health values.

Howard Ennes

### TVA: Cool Clear Water?

Knoxville, Tenn.

Kelly Hearn's April 20 "Tennessee's Dirty Data," about Tennessee Valley Authority water sampling after the coal ash spill at a TVA power plant, plays to people's fears using uninformed speculation. Certified results consistently show public and private drinking water supplies in the vicinity meet state and federal health standards.

The five sampling locations Hearn characterizes as evidence of an attempt to manipulate sampling are floating stations positioned to monitor turbidity from dredging. They are one small part of the comprehensive water-quality monitoring program. Hearn's misinformed speculation could have been avoided had he asked TVA.

The TVA has sought since the spill occurred to ensure that air, water and soil samples are representative of environmental conditions and are analyzed by certified laboratories. These monitoring networks were reviewed and approved by the US Environmental Protection Agency and state officials to ensure comprehensive, representative sampling.

To date, TVA and the Tennessee Department of Conservation and Environment have collected more than 800 river water samples, and the sampling continues at a rate of fifty to sixty per week. All samples are analyzed by the state health department or certified independent laboratories. In addition, the state has analyzed more than 100 samples from private wells.

TVA stands by the integrity of the sampling and testing performed at the spill site. The data are posted at tva.com along with detailed information about the recovery project. Our primary commitment is to protect the health and safety of the public and our employees, who work and live in the community. We are fulfilling that commitment through certified professional environmental monitoring conducted with oversight from state, local and federal officials.

Anda Ray, *senior vice president*
*Office of Environment & Research*
*Tennessee Valley Authority*

### Hearn Replies

Buenos Aires

It is not true that I failed to ask TVA about the water-testing sites listed in the dredging permit. I did, and I documented as much in an e-mail to Gil Francis, a TVA spokesman. I told Francis that experts were basing their criticisms of TVA's water-contamination data in part on the five sampling sites listed in the dredging application. TVA had ample opportunity to respond to my statements and queries or to clarify any misinterpretation.

Rewinding a bit, *The Nation* made a request in February to see the GPS coordinates for water-quality testing sites. That request was met only recently, after my article was published. In its letter, TVA still refuses to make sense of why its sampling produces "safe" results while third-party sampling finds extremely toxic levels of arsenic and other metals.

Kelly Hearn

### A Day That Does *Not* Live in Infamy

Matinicus, Me.

Thomas J. Sugrue, in his review of two biographies of Franklin Roosevelt ["The Hundred Days War," April 27], says that FDR "repealed Prohibition." As strong as his desire may have been to do that, Roosevelt lacked the authority. Repeal was effected by the passage of the Twenty-first Amendment, on December 5, 1933.

Bill Hoadley

### Clarification

Katha Pollitt says in her May 18 "Subject to Debate" column that Douglas Feith is a visiting scholar at the Belfer Center of Harvard's Kennedy School of Government. He is an *adjunct* visiting scholar.

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# Books & the Arts.

COLLECTION OF B.Z. AND MICHAEL SCHWARTZ

*Big Camera, Small Camera*, by Laurie Simmons, 1977

# A Million Little Pictures

**by BARRY SCHWABSKY**

"On Saturday, September 30, 1967," as artist Robert Smithson was careful to specify, he embarked on a trip from New York's Port Authority Bus Terminal to his hometown. He was about to undertake what in his now-famous text he would call "A Tour of the Monuments of Passaic, New Jersey." (It's not clear whether the piece should be called an essay or a story; perhaps it's best to call it an artwork made of writing and pictures.) The monuments in question were things like concrete abutments for a highway under construction and a pumping derrick connected to a long pipe. As he stepped off the bus at his first monument, a bridge connecting Bergen and Passaic counties across the Passaic River, Smithson noticed that "Noon-day sunshine cinema-ized the site, turning the bridge and the river into an overexposed *picture*. Photographing it with my Instamatic 400 was like photographing a photograph. The sun became a monstrous light-bulb that projected a series of detached 'stills' through my Instamatic into my eye. When I walked on the bridge, it was as though I was walking on an enormous photograph that was made of wood and steel, and underneath the river existed as an enormous movie film that showed nothing but a continuous blank."

Writing in a tone derived in part from the deceptive objectivity of the French *nouveau roman* (he quotes from *Mobile*, Michel Butor's collage-travelogue of the United States) and in part from British new-wave science fiction (he entertains himself on the bus ride with the *New York Times* and Brian Aldiss's dystopian sci-fi novel *Earthworks*), Smithson evokes a vacant reality made only of "memory-traces of an abandoned set of futures." Critics fascinated with Smithson's apparently post-Duchampian idea that banal objects become art simply by being looked at a certain way—that "a great artist can make art by simply casting a glance," as he would write a year later—have often overlooked the way Smithson framed his saturnine view of postindustrial culture through the eye of the camera. His alienation allows him to perceive that things, made or natural, are mere photographs of themselves, and that these photographs are essentially "stills" excerpted from the film that is time. Rereading "The Monuments of Passaic," one begins to wonder whether the grainy snapshots with which Smithson illustrated his text are secretly not photographs of the monuments but in fact the monuments themselves. It is clear that, for him, the image is always of something that was already an image. Artists have perennially had the feeling that they are merely the channel for something that is already art, but Smithson's notion of sunlight pitching images into his eye through the camera is a peculiarly gnostic or paranoid version of it, with a visceral punch characteristic of a contemporary of William Burroughs, J.G. Ballard and Philip K. Dick.

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*Barry Schwabsky, an American art critic and poet living in London, recently published* Book Left Open in the Rain *(Black Square Editions/The Brooklyn Rail).*

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Smithson died in a plane crash in 1973 at the age of 35, so he could hardly have been part of the exhibition now at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, "The Pictures Generation 1974–1984" (through August 2), which is devoted to a loosely knit group of artists mostly born ten to fifteen years after him—the first wave of baby boomers, if you like, the first generation to grow up with (black-and-white) TV. And Smithson is barely even mentioned as an influence on this group in the extensive catalog essay by the exhibition's curator, Douglas Eklund, who imagines Smithson as an artist of "cataclysmic processes and sublime vistas of the natural world," as distinguished from these younger artists who were more immersed in "the media culture of movies and television, popular music, and magazines, which to them constituted a sort of fifth element or prevailing kind of weather." Eklund nominates Smithson's contemporary John Baldessari, a smaller artist but a legendary teacher, as the Pictures group's honorary *chef d'école*. Yet Smithson's ghost lingers everywhere in the show, and as ghosts tend to do, it lingers mostly to reproach. What a work like "The Monuments of Passaic" shows so clearly is that, for Smithson, nature and the image-apparatus were one and the same, and to see is always to see a mediated image. Some of the works in "The Pictures Generation"—most of the best ones—are based on the same premise. But too many of the artists really do seem to have believed, as Eklund does now, that their work should be concerned with "media culture" as a self-contained area of investigation, and their work is all the narrower for that.

COURTESY THE ARTIST AND METRO PICTURES, NEW YORK CITY

*Untitled Film Still #54*, by Cindy Sherman, 1980

"The Pictures Generation" takes its title from a famous exhibition of 1977—famous in the sense that many more people remember it than ever really saw it. The original "Pictures" took place at the nonprofit gallery Artists Space, in New York City, and it was further publicized by a couple of articles by its curator, the critic Douglas Crimp, published in *Flash Art* and *October* in 1979. Of course, the Met show is far more than a rerun. Crimp exhibited the work of just five artists (Troy Brauntuch, Jack Goldstein, Sherrie Levine, Robert Longo and Philip Smith), whereas Eklund's "Pictures Generation" encompasses nearly thirty—among whom Smith, by the way, has gone missing without the slightest explanation. There's nothing wrong with that in itself because Smith's work, a more traditional kind of painting, really does seem to have been on a different track. But it's unfortunate that a reader of the catalog (co-published by the Met and Yale University Press) might easily not realize he had ever been included.

That's just one example of how Eklund, having amassed a vast amount of information on his artists and their milieu, has organized it haphazardly. The catalog is a rarity in being blessed with an index, but if you look up "Pictures" in the index, you will find, perversely enough, multiple references to "artists not included in" the 1977 show but no entry to point you to a page that says who was included. Basically, though, Eklund's loose-knit Pictures generation mainly comprises two distinct groups of artists. One consists of former students of Baldessari's at Cal Arts who had moved east to New York. The other group, less academic in formation and more working class in origin, had gathered around the artist-run space Hallwalls in Buffalo before migrating downstate. There, both groups gravitated to Artists Space and the downtown art and music scene, and some of the artists began to show with the commercial gallery Metro Pictures, which was co-founded by the former director of Artists Space, Helene Winer, in 1980. Its opening was immediately and presciently seen by the critic Robert Pincus-Witten as "definitely" marking "the death of the '60s" (as though the intervening decade had merely been an extension of it).

Pincus-Witten's judgment should raise suspicions when we read Eklund's summation of what constitutes the rough unity of the Pictures group: "They synthesized the lessons of Minimalism and Conceptualism in which they were educated, with a renewed (though hardly uniform) attention to Pop art because it chimed with the new, media-driven world they had inherited." Maybe, but if all that was at stake in the work of the Pictures generation was an effort to tie up a tidy little semiotic package out of the unruly and contradictory impulses of an older generation, it's not likely anyone would be taking the trouble to reexamine their work today. Opening the exhibition up to encompass so many artists was a good decision in that it helps recreate a sense of context, but a more stringent selection focusing on, say, nine central figures—Brauntuch, Goldstein, Levine and Longo plus Louise Lawler, Allan McCollum, Richard Prince, Cindy Sherman and James Welling—would have allowed for more specificity. One might then have said that the Pictures group had gleaned from the Minimalists and Conceptualists a sense that art should assume an incommunicative, pugnaciously neutral stance—that it should throw down the gauntlet of its own incomprehensibility. The public's inability to find anything to see or any evidence of work or meaning in, say, a row of bricks by Carl Andre might be repeated in its encounter with Levine's photograph of a photograph by Walker Evans or one by James Welling showing some crumpled foil. But this willingness to use recalcitrant inconsequentiality to frustrate the viewer's desire might be all they have in common.

As for Pop, the Pictures group has something in common with that too: the idea that images are out there for the taking, that art is not necessarily about creating a new image

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but about seeing existing images differently. And yet the sense of the image, or of what to look for in it, is different: Pop was more about the signal, Pictures more about the noise; Pop was hi-fi, Pictures lo-fi. Above all, the Pop artists found a kind of liberation in the discovery that their art was already out there in the world, hidden in plain sight. To the Pictures artists, intent on cultivating their disillusion, such optimism would have seemed naïve; at most they could hope to "turn the lie back on itself," as Prince once put it. Andy Warhol said, "just look at the surface: of my paintings and films and me, and there I am. There's nothing behind it." For Pictures, there is something behind the surface, and it's another, even emptier and more disquieting, surface. Sometimes that other surface can be identified as a form of ideological manipulation, and when it is, the resulting work acts as a form of demythologization, sometimes verging on agitprop or satire. Barbara Kruger ruthlessly pursued this approach, fashioning found images overlaid with blunt slogans, such as Your Gaze Hits the Side of My Face, or Your Moments of Joy Have the Precision of Military Strategy, that seem to address the (often implicitly male) viewer as an antagonist. But with a kind of implacable scorn, Kruger asserts total control over the interpretation of the image that is meant to be demythologized, its hidden presuppositions unveiled, which is why I don't place her among the artists central to the Pictures sensibility.

Those artists, for the most part, veer away from this kind of claim to decode the image (Lawler being a partial exception). Typically, the Pictures artists work from the assumption that it may not be possible to offer a clear ideological interpretation of an image. If "images compose our preconceptions and expectations of the possible, and in that sense we are their product," as Welling conjectured in a dialogue with David Salle, then it must be (as the dialogue's title had it) the "images that understand us" rather than vice versa. Welling and Salle, along with other Pictures artists, are, like Smithson, fascinated by their own passivity with respect to the images that willy-nilly flow through them.

Sometimes the line between understanding pictures and being understood by them can be hazy, however. Consider Sarah Charlesworth's *April 21, 1978* (from the series Modern History), 1978, which reproduces the front pages of European and North American newspapers for that day, but with everything erased except the paper's


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banner and photos—no text. On April 20 the Italian Red Brigades had released a photograph of Aldo Moro, the kidnapped Christian Democrat politician and former prime minister, holding up a copy of the newspaper *La Repubblica*, thus proving that he was still alive. Each of the April 21 newspapers shows this image, but always differently cropped (sometimes excluding everything but Moro's face, sometimes including the Red Brigades banner behind him) and at a different scale, sometimes (as with the Italian newspapers *Il Messaggero* and, of course, *La Repubblica*) as the only front-page picture, sometimes (as in the Danish *Politiken* or the Canadian *Globe and Mail*) as one of a multitude of small images. Charlesworth's work is undoubtedly intended to reflect, as Eklund says, the semiotic investigations of the early Roland Barthes, but how informative is it really to discover that the Italians give much more weight to the kidnapping of one of their leading politicians than do the Danes? As a demonstration of how an image produced by a revolutionary terrorist group in order to manipulate a precise political situation is manipulated in turn by various news organizations for their own purposes and then manipulated again, presumably for more disinterested ends, by Charlesworth herself, the work is effective but thin. (For Charlesworth, the news organizations become authors of the image in turn, just as an artist like Levine did by rephotographing a classic art photograph.) The work's simple, didactic content seems, in retrospect, less like a raison d'être than an alibi. What gives the work its real fascination, for anyone who takes the bait of the grim and (as always in Italy) unfathomable story behind the image, is how the seemingly endless multiplication of the Moro photograph, always different but always the same, takes on its own logic, endlessly relaying the melodrama of the situation while rendering it ever more unreal—and how the artist has allowed herself to become one more relay in this circuit, not its diagnostician.

This fascination with the endless self-propagation of the image reaches its apotheosis, curiously enough, in a work that might seem to have no images in it at all. Allan McCollum's *Plaster Surrogates*—made between 1982 and 1984 and most spectacularly displayed in 1983 at New York's Marian Goodman Gallery—are hundreds upon hundreds of rectangular objects (there are forty at the Met) made of enamel paint on hydro-stone. They hang on the wall in very dense aggregations—way beyond "salon style." They resemble matted and framed pictures—the frames here being one or another shade of gray but also existing in different colors—but with the central framed "image" entirely black. Perhaps for the simple reason that they are painted, or perhaps because they derive from an earlier series by McCollum called *Surrogate Paintings*, I always thought of these works (this is how they have usually been discussed) as a commentary on painting. The painter and critic Thomas Lawson, whose work is also included in the show, approvingly called them "little model paintings" in an *Artforum* review of McCollum's show at Goodman, "surrogates for painting with little in the way of individuating character." But seeing them here, in the context of an exhibition that is overwhelmingly of photographs and in which paintings are quite rare, the impression was rather that these were surrogates for photographs, the whole manner of matting and framing that the pieces mimic being typical of art photography. The black of the central rectangle would then make sense as an exaggeration of that in black-and-white photographs—as if these were radically underexposed. Even more than Charlesworth's front pages, McCollum's installation seems to give itself over to an obsessive desire to encounter the same image over and over again, to see it as always potentially different, always potentially ready to give up its secret—even if it has no secret and can hardly even be thought of as an image, or perhaps all the more so if minimum information equals maximum mystery.

> Some of the photos presume a commentator whispering in your ear—a mark of bad faith.

A lot of the work in this show wants to be mysterious, but too much of it depends on having a sovereign, unacknowledged commentator whispering in your ear to point out what's mysterious about it. Among the images making up Brauntuch's photographic triptych *Untitled (Mercedes)*, 1978, is one of a man's head, slumped over as if asleep, in the passenger seat of a car—an image that is a tiny component of a work that is mostly blank, but hieratic and altarlike in its configuration. The work's undeniably creepy overtones are inseparable from its muteness, but what becomes of that muteness when one learns from the catalog that the man in the image is Hitler, the photograph having been taken from Albert Speer's book *Inside the Third Reich*? It suddenly seems like cheap manipulation. Craig Owens—who along with Crimp was the main critical advocate of the Pictures group—observed of similar works that "whether or not we will ever acquire the key necessary to unlock their secret remains a matter of pure chance, and this gives Brauntuch's work its undeniable *pathos*, which is also the source of its strength." But it never was a matter of chance; acquiring the key was always a matter of being deliberately clued in—wink, wink—and this is part of the work's bad faith.

But I don't want to end on that sour note. Cindy Sherman's *Untitled Film Stills*, 1977–80, are undoubtedly the best-known images here, and deservedly so, for familiarity has not extinguished their complexity or freshness. In Sherman's pictures it is not the photograph so much as its subject—partaking of the image-reality—who is at once always identical and always different. Sherman reappears in endless, anonymous walk-on roles—the girl waiting for a ride on the lonely roadside, the scuba diver, the sexy babe staring out the window waiting for someone who may never come and so on. Each of Sherman's reappearances in these photographs seems to be as someone we've seen before and will certainly see again, more or less, in some other B movie. Yet if each is a stereotype, it's one we get too brief a glimpse of to be able to put a definite name to.

"It is important to remember how unassuming and even mystifying they seemed in the beginning," Eklund rightly cautions, and this show succeeds almost too well in putting Sherman's stills back into the context from which they emerged—just a few more gray and grainy photos in an exhibition full of them, each as indifferent as the next to the traditional criteria of clarity of form and dramatic tonal range as guarantees of photographic art. Yet Sherman's, if you look again, have a power the others lack, because she is neither offering a critique of the image nor simply indulging her fascination with it. Smithson ventured into the postindustrial landscape and discovered that its ontology was that of an image; Sherman broached the terrain of personal identity and discovered something similar. In doing so, she seems to be showing us something about ourselves, not just about images as a category separate from ourselves. Hers really are "images that understand us." ■

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# Last Man Standing

**by AKIVA GOTTLIEB**

People have been writing Clint Eastwood's obituary for about as long as the man's been making movies. This is not without his encouragement. Every new picture is a valediction, as every ending ushers our martyred hero off into the shadows to his eternal good night. Last year's release of *Gran Torino*, said to be Clint's final film as a performer, only heightens the impulse to tie a bow around his career. Nostalgic reverence is not much to ask from an audience, but Eastwood seeks it again and again, with a child's petulant sense of entitlement. Though he was born in San Francisco, he missed the summer of love, LSD, the sexual revolution and all the spoils of American bohemia because he was too busy combating evil and moral relativism in the name of justice. Sacrifice demands recognition. In contemporary American cinema, Clint Eastwood is our perennial Last Man Standing. But what is he standing on, or for, and why is he so eager to hide it?

Always the father, never the son, Eastwood is a male Athena emerged fully formed from the Nixon-era hive mind, ready and willing to blast a hole through any son of a bitch who asks too many questions. A lightning rod for cheap moralizing, a starkly ambivalent embodiment of American masculinity, a callous vigilante and a sentimental old fogy, Clint Eastwood has become indivisible from his many myths. Fearing exposure as an actor, he wrested control over his image by becoming a methodical, disciplined director. In his guise as a traditional stoic with no use for politics, he actively assaults the pieties of social progress, perversely testing the limits of audience support, and those caught in his paternal sway reward him for his tough love. *Unforgiven*? No. Always forgiven.

Eastwood's persona begs scrutiny because his accomplishments befit the title of a true American Original. A gentle stylist informed by classic Hollywood tropes, obsessed with the interplay between darkness and light, as well as a plain-spoken existentialist who remains fearless in the face of Big Questions, Eastwood makes films that still draw teenagers to drive-ins and elicit weeping at the Museum of Modern Art. As a director, he conceives of his disparate films as a body of work to be reckoned with in toto, but he's also a full-time curator of the pesky, ever resurfacing "Clint Eastwood, cowboy hero" mythology. These two enterprises are at odds with each other, and they present a challenge he has never quite overcome. In his desire to be both the uncomplicated hero and the morally conflicted poet of masculine despair, Eastwood has sacrificed some of his work's potential power. What remains, behind all the bluster, is the man's need. Like any icon, the 78-year-old Clint Eastwood just wants to be adored, but his conception of manhood won't allow him to admit it.

This story begins in 1971, when the center could not hold, except at the movies. That December, *Dirty Harry* premiered at a benefit for the San Francisco Police Activities League, a hospitable setting for a film that opens with a scrolling tribute to Bay Area cops killed in the line of duty. The pre-credit sequence showcases an unhip reverence for law and order, a gesture made doubly provocative by the fact that only a single nameless cop is killed in the film. It was just a taste of the provocation to come. Directed by hard-nosed B movie auteur Don Siegel and featuring Eastwood, *Box Office* magazine's "star of the year," *Dirty Harry* is an endlessly inflammatory, almost anarchic movie, one that undermines the viewer's trust in all institutions, all heroes, all villains.

The movie's setup is outlandish. The titular San Francisco police inspector chases the sadistic and methodical Scorpio—a serial killer with shaggy hippie hair and an effeminate demeanor—around the city of leftist vice, eventually exploiting all manner of enhanced interrogation techniques in order to protect Scorpio's targets, while his weak-willed superiors (aided, naturally, by a Berkeley law professor) prefer to acquiesce to the killer's demands. No real-world police force would let a murderer run free on such minor technicalities. But in the decade following *Miranda v. Arizona* and *Escobedo v. Illinois*, Eastwood's cop is revolted by a justice system that affords the criminal more rights than the victim. A virile, quietly menacing crusader for a justice that transcends the rule of law, "Dirty" Harry Callahan and his .44 Magnum bore the burden for all that polite liberal America truly felt but was afraid to say. The man who had made his name as the Man With No Name in Sergio Leone's spaghetti westerns became the mythical manifestation of Nixon's Silent Majority.

ANTHONY MICHAEL RIVETTI/WARNER BROS. PICTURES

Clint Eastwood as Walt Kowalski in *Gran Torino*

A one-woman subsection of liberal America pushed back, and not at all politely. In the January 15, 1972, issue of *The New Yorker*, Pauline Kael wrote:

> *Dirty Harry* is obviously just a genre movie, but this action genre has always had a fascist potential, and it has finally surfaced. If crime were caused by super-evil dragons, there would be no Miranda, no Escobedo; we could all be licensed to kill, like Dirty Harry. But since crime is caused by deprivation, misery, psychopathology, and social injustice, *Dirty Harry* is a deeply immoral movie.

In essence, Kael accused Siegel and Eastwood of training American anger on an Evil With No Name. Evil is treated as something imprecise, the product of unknowable origins. It's a devilishly effective diatribe, even if Kael does manage to squeeze off a few cheap shots. "On the way out, a pink-cheeked little girl was saying 'That was a *good* picture' to her father," Kael notes, with improbable verisimilitude. She also claims, "The movie was cheered and applauded by Puerto Ricans in the audience, and they jeered—as they were meant to—when the maniac whined and pleaded for his legal rights." How she verified the ethnic makeup of the audience

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while watching the movie escapes me.

Richard Schickel, author of the deferential but illuminating 1996 authorized biography *Clint Eastwood*, claims that the actor had no intention of causing an uproar with *Dirty Harry* and that the Kael review and its fallout haunted Eastwood throughout his career. "One time in the midst of his recent acclaim he asked me if I'd happened to see an interview in which Pauline Kael said that one of her regrets about retirement was that she no longer had a forum in which to criticize Clint Eastwood. 'Can you imagine that kind of bigotry?' He sighed." Nevertheless, in his examination of the Kael fallout, Schickel allows that the review may have provided short-term benefits for the actor:

> She made people wonder: Did this guarded and enigmatic character have a devious political agenda, more threatening than, say, John Wayne's, who had at least always been forthright about his reactionary views? Was he something more than an actor who specialized in playing dangerous characters? Was he, in himself, a dangerous character? Unwittingly, Kael made him into a subject for speculation in circles where scarcely a serious thought had been spared for him previously.

With just a few column inches, Kael had ushered the popcorn demigod into the political spotlight. Despite his protestations, he has remained there ever since, keeping close watch over his mystique. At the 1971 Oscars, though Eastwood's breakthrough film had received no nominations, angry moviegoers raised placards that read Dirty Harry Is a Rotten Pig. According to J. Hoberman's whirlwind history of 1960s cinema and politics, *The Dream Life*, which features a stylized snapshot of Harry Callahan on its front cover, sporting his outsize revolver and a Nixon/Agnew '72 pin, George H.W. Bush would later credit Ronald Reagan for transforming America's moviegoing predilections: citizens now wanted less *Easy Rider* and more *Dirty Harry*. As president, brandishing his veto power like a Smith & Wesson, Reagan would respond to a tax-happy Congress by hissing the very words Dirty Harry used to taunt perps: "Go ahead, make my day." At the same time, Eastwood's vigilante flick was reportedly the movie most often screened by Leonid Brezhnev and the Politburo.

Whatever his feelings about the role, Clint Eastwood does not bear responsibility for the cultural appropriation of *Dirty Harry*. He didn't write or direct the film—though *Sudden Impact* (1983), the sequel he did direct, is even less morally conflicted than the original. After Sondra Locke begins killing off members of the gang that raped her and her sister, Dirty Harry ends up directly assisting this killer's cause. Harry spits his "make my day" barb for the first time in this sequel, making clear that the killing could metamorphose into something enjoyable. Eastwood never disavowed the message of Siegel's original but interpreted it as a simple plea for common sense. "The real romance of the film," Eastwood once said, is that "the audience is sitting there going, 'Yeah, if I was stuck down [in a pit] for five hours, I wouldn't want some guy talking about the Miranda decision. I'd want somebody out there trying to get my ass out of there.' That's just kind of basic. I didn't see anything political about that."

**Some icons are martyrs to a cause. Clint Eastwood is a martyr to himself.**

Kael had it mostly right when she described *Dirty Harry* as a "hardhat *The Fountainhead*." Howard Roark, the Ayn Rand novel's hero as well as her ultimate idealist, is colored by his absolute refusal to compromise and his faith in the virtue of his selfishness. He takes what he wants—even rape is justified—in pursuit of a beautiful higher vision. *High Plains Drifter* (1973), the first western that Eastwood directed, is an absolute Randian vision. In the film, the citizens of a fallen town grant free agency to the nameless superman who arrives on a horse to save them from themselves. Common folks are portrayed as shallow, cowardly and unheroic—Eastwood's character makes a mockery of their democracy by pinning the sheriff's badge on a dwarf. To repay their savior, they relinquish to him their women, their food and their free will without question. It's hell even before Eastwood forces them to literally paint the town red.

"Dirty" Harry Callahan is not quite a Roark figure. The man's sadness, and his protective instinct, stems from the death of his wife, though we never learn anything about their life together. His vigilantism is not the pursuit of a higher vision but rather a pragmatic attempt to prevent the pain of the innocent. That said, this man is an island; he has no childhood, no lover, no friends. Dirty Harry is not alone in his isolation: in *High Plains Drifter*, Eastwood's character is known as the Stranger. In *Pale Rider*, he is simply the Preacher. In Sergio Leone's westerns, he has no name at all. Perhaps *Dirty Harry* is most pointedly a cautionary tale about rootless heroes who attempt to define evil on their own terms—Scorpio is the kind of absolutist villain only Harry Callahan could invent.

The common thread in Eastwood-directed films is the exposure of namelessness as a lie. Nearly every Eastwood character—and despite the fact that Eastwood the director has never written a single script, there are few other actors who so consistently cast themselves in the same role—attempts to operate as a lone wolf, motivated by self-interest, and his autonomy is always cut down by family ties, origins or returns of the repressed. He reminds viewers that every self-projected myth of manhood hides a stockpile of shortcomings and embarrassments. Nothing comes from nowhere. John Wayne's real name, don't forget, was Marion Morrison.

Some icons are martyrs to a cause. Eastwood is a martyr to himself. His intransigence (and manhood) is always under assault from liberal pieties—or from feminists, civil libertarians, good-government bureaucrats and people of color. He is not just a fatalist or a cynic; he is a declinist. Even as a young actor—and it's important to note that he has never looked young in a movie—he set himself in opposition to cultural progress. The youth have nothing to offer and exist only to be trained. Though his characters eventually yield to the prevailing societal currents, it's never without an air of self-congratulation. We are expected to celebrate Eastwood for his minimal gestures of conciliation. In *The Fountainhead*, Dominique asserts that Roark's greatness should not be offered to a world unwilling to express its gratitude. Eastwood feels much the same way.

In *Play Misty for Me* (1971), Eastwood's directorial debut, a playboy disc jockey attempts to rebuff the affections of an obsessed fan, played by Jessica Walter, who stalks him after a one-night stand. Here the lone wolf is confronted by the consequences of his actions, and the movie works as a thriller because it makes the hero look so vulnerable. Eastwood, who stars as the DJ, has a nightmarish confrontation with a caricature of unbridled female desire; he ends up knocking his stalker off a cliff to restore his masculine equilibrium. Critic Dave Kehr notes that Walter's performance was "so creepy and sexually aggressive that she hardly worked again

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for years." The perpetually unmarried Eastwood character has never understood how to integrate powerful females into his universe. Let's not forget that the catalyst for the epic eruption of violence in *Unforgiven* is a whore's laughter at the size of a cowboy's penis.

In the late 1970s and early '80s, Eastwood made a series of films with his new paramour Sondra Locke. A feisty, foul-mouthed firecracker in an undersized frame, Locke played Eastwood's liberated-female comic foil in *The Gauntlet*, *Bronco Billy* and *Every Which Way but Loose*. Her presence signals Eastwood's concession to the post–*Fear of Flying* era, but Locke is a feminist figure only in the most cartoonish sense. In *The Gauntlet* she plays a tough-talking hooker who wields her sexuality like a weapon. Eastwood plays a cop escorting her to a trial, and when bikers attack him on a boxcar, Locke unbuttons her blouse and invites them to rape her—under the correct assumption that Eastwood will attack them while their backs are turned. In another scene, to Eastwood's apparent disgust, she intimidates a perverted cop by asking him if his wife knows that he masturbates. By the end, she makes clear that her chief feminine desire is to settle down with Eastwood in a home with a backyard and two kids.

In *Bronco Billy*, Locke plays a whore of another sort, marrying a feckless Manhattan male so that she can satisfy the conditions for inheriting her father's wealth. Eastwood's title character is the washed-up star of a rodeo roadshow, an evangelist for the Wild West who reluctantly accepts the woman into his band of misfits and ex-convicts, as long as she's willing to play by his rules. You know Locke's character has matured when Bronco Billy ruminates: "I didn't like her too well myself, at the beginning, but she's coming around to my way of thinking now." Richard Schickel, who praises the film for its appreciation of core values, admits that Locke's voice essentially "exists to be awed into silence by this gently cracked true believer." The dimensions of Eastwood's world are neatly captured in the final shot of the film, which finds the whole gang congregated happily beneath Bronco Billy's big tent, stitched together with stars and stripes.

Though *Gran Torino* was shut out of this year's Oscars, Eastwood's latest moral reckoning has emerged as the biggest box office smash of his career—when the 2008 Academy Awards were handed out, it had outgrossed all five of the nominees for Best Picture. This is shocking because the early trailer for the film—featuring a grizzled Eastwood packing heat and intimidating an Asian gang by sneering "Get off my lawn!"—looked like an elaborate joke. (Indeed, a quick scan of *Gran Torino*'s "memorable quotes" page on IMDb, which doubles as a formidable repository of racist folk humor, proves that this is Eastwood's most broadly comic film as a director.) But in the benighted contemporary American movie landscape, it's understandable why the film is being taken so seriously. In a rave review, the *New York Times*'s Manohla Dargis argues that Eastwood's films "show an urgent engagement with the tougher, messier, bigger questions of American life." The movie addresses the growing Hmong minority in the Midwest with some sensitivity and offers a timely elegy for white male middle-class hegemony. Eastwood plays Walt Kowalski, a Polish-American Korean War vet and recently retired Ford assembly-line worker (as it happens, the movie opened the day the Senate rejected the since-ratified General Motors bailout). But more than any movie since *Unforgiven*, in which Eastwood, playing a retired gunslinger, wrestles with his Man With No Name legacy, *Gran Torino* is also a meditation on Clint Eastwood and his own obsolescence.

Walt Kowalski is a walking anachronism. *Gran Torino* opens at his wife's funeral in a Detroit suburb. (If an Eastwood character begins a movie as a married man, his wife usually dies before the opening credits.) We meet Walt's ungrateful children, one of whom sheepishly drives a Toyota, and his even more brutish grandchildren, who can't wait for the old man to shuffle off so they can turn their heirlooms into dorm-room accessories. Their grandfather spends an inordinate amount of time muttering and growling, cultivating his lean, mean mystique, nursing cans of Pabst Blue Ribbon and polishing his 1972 Ford Gran Torino, a worshiped piece of Americana. The Gran Torino is his final bulwark against the increasingly vulgar, multicultural world looming outside his front door. When a posse of Hmong gangsters attempts to steal his vehicle, the septuagenarian soldier decides to mete out his own brand of justice, inadvertently shielding the law-abiding Hmong community from this reckless band of urban cowboys.

In the hour leading up to the climactic confrontation, the movie centers around this bigot's relationship with the Hmong family next door. He wants these "zipperheads" off his property, but they keep returning to offer gifts to the accidental hero. The son, Thao, who attempted to steal the car as a gang initiation rite, offers himself as Walt's indentured servant as an act of penance. Thao is

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fatherless, a necessary contrivance that puts *Gran Torino*'s agenda into play, because Walt needs to teach this immigrant to become "man of the house." While refusing to learn how to pronounce his name, Walt reluctantly teaches "Toad" how to wear a tool belt, pick up a woman and, in one particularly memorable scene, talk like a man.

Walt takes Thao into his local barbershop, where Walt makes a monthly visit to insult the barber's ethnicity and manhood in playful but vulgar fashion. When Thao makes an honest attempt at playing the game, calling the guy an "old Italian son-of-a-bitch prick barber," we laugh only because of his awkward diction. Why do audiences chuckle at a scene that implies immigrants should jump through hoops and help maintain certain white male rites of passage in order to be taken seriously as Americans? It's offensive and condescending, but more important, it's false. *Gran Torino* never entertains the idea that America is a country defined by its immigrants and not by John Wayne.

Because *Gran Torino* follows an archetypal Eastwood plot, Walt loosens up just enough to accept the persistent kindness of Thao's older sister, Sue Lor. She's a remarkably confident and compassionate young woman, with one foot in Hmong tradition and the other in her bright American future, able to see through this bigot's bluster and never flinching when he brags, "I'm the White Devil." Unfortunately, *Gran Torino*'s plot eventually reduces Sue Lor to an archetype—a woman who exists to be violated and then protected. Sue Lor is raped by the local gang, which precipitates Walt's apparently selfless decision to martyr himself.

In the film's penultimate scene, after locking Thao in a basement, Walt approaches the gang hideout, essentially offering himself as a human sacrifice. It's a scene that mirrors the climactic saloon sequence in *The Outlaw Josey Wales*, except this time Eastwood is on the receiving end of the mythic transaction. "You got a light?" he asks, of no one in particular, summoning the peculiar sang-froid and smooth rhetoric that attaches to Harry Callahan before a decisive spasm of violence. "Me—I've got a light." He reaches into his pocket to retrieve his lighter. The gang members, thinking that Walt is packing heat and has come to exact revenge on Sue Lor's behalf, kill him with a blistering volley of gunfire. As our star falls to the ground, eagerly awaiting spiritual absolution for the sins of Dirty Harry, his limbs lock into a Jesus Christ pose. Even when Eastwood is trying to escape an outsize mythology, he cannot escape another outsize mythology.

The gesture seems especially paltry when compared with the heartbreaking resolution of Darren Aronofsky's *The Wrestler*, a recent film that bears Eastwoodian hallmarks without succumbing to self-pity. (Eastwood's *Changeling*, released just months before *Gran Torino*, also exudes a comparable maturity, if only because Eastwood wisely displaces his own martyrdom onto Angelina Jolie.) Like Walt Kowalski, Randy the Ram (Mickey Rourke) uses violence in the ring to negotiate his loneliness outside the arena, and his past is littered with the bodies of the vanquished. But unlike Walt, Randy recognizes that redemption isn't possible, either through his family or an honest day's work. Randy's estranged daughter does not welcome his lame overtures with the unlikely kindness of Walt's Hmong neighbors, and his part-time gig behind a deli counter is alienating—the store even puts his real name, Robin, on the name tag. He knows his macho mythology is deflated, but it's all he's got. Walt thinks his fall is a purification. Randy knows that his own fall, a de facto suicide achieved through the execution of his trademark move, a diving elbow-drop called the Ram Jam, is a capitulation.

In the closing scene of *Gran Torino*, a lawyer reads from the dead man's will, which Walt had written himself. It turns out that he had chosen to bequeath the titular totem of middle-class luxury to Thao, "on the condition that you don't chop-top the roof like one of those beaners, don't paint any idiotic flames on it like some white trash hillbilly and don't put a big gay spoiler on the rear end like you see on all of the other zipperheads' cars." In other words, Walt gets to keep his racial epithets and be the hero, too. The closing credits roll over a shot of Thao cruising in his new vehicle of assimilation, with Eastwood's raspy voice cooing gently on the soundtrack, reminding the next generation just who we have to thank for our liberty.

The traditional Eastwood hero—and Clint, for all his bluster, has never played a villain—spends an inordinate amount of time pushing other people away, only to grudgingly accept the perseverant embrace of the outside world, as long as the world is defined exclusively in terms of his suffering. If Eastwood is to be credited for artistic and emotional growth, his mythic doppelgängers must learn to accept a love that asserts itself without conditions. He has publicly reduced his political credo to "everyone leaves everyone else alone." That philosophy is a reason to become a hermit. It's a reason to vote for regressive taxation and Second Amendment rights. It's not a reason to make movies. ■

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# Dirt Dogs and Jinegar

by NICK STILLMAN

**The Dickson Baseball Dictionary**
By Paul Dickson.
Norton. 974 pp. $49.95.

Maine is on the northern edge of a pocket of the country that breeds obsessive fandom for the Boston Red Sox and venom for the New York Yankees. That place is known as Red Sox Nation, and my introduction to its treacherous emotional terrain came early. When I was a kid my dad worked the night shift at L.L. Bean. It was something I grew to resent. As compensation for scant father-son time, we developed a ritual: while I slept, he would artistically fan out on the kitchen table an assortment of baseball card packs—each with a colorful wax wrapper—for me to discover in the morning. One day my father was home to witness me tearing into his gift of cardboard gold, and I made a crucial error: I chirped that the card I coveted was Don Mattingly's—then the Yankees' young star first baseman. Dad snatched the packs away. "Son," he softly intoned under a frowning mustache, "that's bush."

Bush? I'm unsure if it was my introduction to the term, but I knew exactly what Dad was getting at. Under his roof, esteem for *anything* Yankee was unacceptable. It was downright amateur, borderline ignorant, even treasonous. As Paul Dickson explains in his impressively comprehensive third edition of *The Dickson Baseball Dictionary*, which features more than 10,000 terms, the origins of "bush" date to 1905, when it referred to geographical exile—the cuts, the sticks, the bushes. Gradually, "bush" has become an enduring baseball term as well as a general condemnation of a crassly unprofessional or inappropriate person or action, something akin to "wack." Gloating in the workplace about a promotion is bush. A bully who bugs the smallest kid in school is bush. Stealing from a tip jar is bush. Defying your father's orders and admiring the perennial tormentors of his favorite baseball team is definitely bush.

Slang is like a breeze; it softly comes and goes, as new times bring new buzzwords. Some stick ("cool" defiantly endures); some induce cringes when dusted off ("groovy" is now in the dustbin of irony). It's obvious when slang becomes less funny or less meaningful through overuse: "Internets," for example, has become too widespread to be implicitly derisive of George W. Bush. Slang, in other words, is inevitably ephemeral—but it's not always incidental. When hip-hop listeners crack the codes of songs en masse, rappers know it's time to invent anew. The refusal of normative, dominant culture—beginning with the fundamentals of language—is embedded in the form. Baseball vernacular, for its part, isn't so expressly political, nor is its obscurity as deliberate. Baseball belongs to the same class of folklore as, say, jazz, hamburgers and even hip-hop—but to employ Ken Burnsian hyperbole about the significance of its wordplay is a tough sell. It is what it is. As Dickson writes, it's "low-key and light"—slang for its own sake. In other words, the richness of baseball's old, weird vernacular is pure, pointless creativity.

For some, its pointlessness is its greatest offense. The baseball journalist Henry Chadwick wrote in the *Galveston Daily News* in 1897 that baseball was being cheapened by sportswriters' "trash slang." In his introduction, Dickson relates how in the early twentieth century *Collier's Weekly* and the *New York Tribune* rallied journalists to purify the language used to describe baseball. Sounds to me like some ol' rubber bellies got their fernalia in a bunch and were feeling the apple. Which is antiquated baseballese for: the stodgy journalists were threatened by ballplayers' declassing of American English. In 1913 the *Chicago Record-American* ran dual recaps of ballgames: one in the dense slang of the time, another using "less boisterous" terminology.

But the boisterousness of baseball slang has proved irrepressible. By coining the derogatory term "father Chadwick" to describe a player past his prime, trash slangsters ensured that Henry Chadwick would live in infamy. And historically, baseball slang has trickled down to the public from Chadwick and other writers with access to the players' hermetic chatter. It's because of today's beat writers and play-by-play announcers that we know how Red Sox second baseman Dustin Pedroia describes his hitting prowess ("laser show") and what Red Sox pitcher Jonathan Papelbon calls his hybrid slider/cutter pitch ("slutter"). Players' slang is jokey and blunt; the words may be strange, but their meaning is usually obvious. That's not the case with the relatively new statistical "trash slang" of baseball's Internet generation. Thanks to Michael Lewis's *Moneyball* (2003), a landmark in recent baseball history for its popularization of newfangled empirical methods for measuring and identifying skills that many teams overlook when evaluating prospects, keyboard jocks use obscure statistics and their acronyms (BABIP, UZR, WHIP) to analyze and describe talent. The fracture this thinking has created between baseball people is palpable and acrimonious. Former players turned announcers like Joe Morgan and Tim McCarver, who played in the '60s and '70s, routinely ridicule the M-word, while the statheads dryly type that the old guys have gone senile.

Much of baseball's current lexicon would make the chaste squirm in their seats. Multiple entries in *The Baseball Dictionary* appropriate but desexualize customary libidinous slang: "bush," for example. A "hooker" is not a streetwalker but rather a right-handed pull hitter—someone whose natural tendency is to hit the ball to left field. "Salami" isn't… *that*… but the royal flush of batting: a grand slam. Getting "waxed" isn't a hair-removal procedure but a pitcher's brutal day at the office. To "hump up" is, innocently enough, when a pitcher expends extra effort on a fastball. This isn't even touching on some of the most colorful slang, like "green weenie," "smoke his tits" and "slutter," one of the very few terms I can say—with no absence of pride—that Dickson missed.

Baseball slang is an avalanche of skewed logic. The commonest words take on very precise meanings. "Stuff" refers quite specifically to the totality of a pitcher's arsenal: his array of pitches and the velocity and movement with which he throws them. A pitcher can easily have good stuff but not succeed if his "command"—the ability to locate pitches accurately—is erratic. Terms associated with dirt and filth are highly complimentary. A hitter respectfully calls an excellent pitcher "filthy," a term that evolved out of common adjectives from a decade ago: "nasty" and "dirty." "Dirtbags" and "dirt dogs" are consummate hustlers, guys with perpetually soiled uniforms and caps and batting helmets stained with sweat, tobacco juice and pine tar. Naturally, dirtbags and dirt dogs play "dirtball." A player

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who is "pretty" is the opposite of a dirtbag, as is a "muffin." Food references are as prevalent as the television announcers who longingly mention the hallowed postgame buffet in the players' clubhouse. The ball itself can be an egg, apricot, apple or stitched potato. "Jelly beans" are rookies and inexperienced kids, the type a veteran might relentlessly call bush for a year before acknowledging him properly. Reaching base for your team's big hitters is "setting the table." "Fat" pitches are hittable ones, almost exclusively delectable treats, my favorite being "ham-and-cheese." And then there's the colorful (although unfortunately out of fashion) term for pep or spirit: "jinegar." Forms of kinship lurk suggestively, with positive connotations only for the hitter. Batters aspire to find their "cousin," the pitcher they manage to hit inexplicably well. In the early 2000s the Yankees' weak-hitting utility infielder Enrique Wilson found an unlikely cousin in the Red Sox's masterful Pedro Martínez, and Pedro's tough luck against the Yankees culminated in his admitting in an infamous interview that the Yanks were his "daddy." It was a rare moment of hearing baseball slang invented in real time.

**Baseball slang is passed along by generations of dirtbags and muffins—not a literary set.**

If Pedro weren't *Pedro*—the best pitcher of the generation and arguably ever—"Pedro" just might have become synonymous with "tortured by the Yankees." Some of the funniest, and most tragic, baseball slang appropriates players' names. A prodigious home run is Ruthian and a Ryanesque fastball is hyperfast, but typically a player who inspires the coinage of a slang term is one who has made an embarrassing play. A century ago, Fred Merkle committed what came to be known as "Merkle's boner," a base-running mistake that cost his New York Giants the pennant in 1908. The *Washington Post* commented in 1914 how his flub "added a new verb to the dictionary, for…when a man performs some bonehead action." To "pull a Buckner" is to allow a routine ground ball to trickle through the wickets—which Bill Buckner did while playing first base for the Red Sox in the tenth inning of a dramatic World Series game against the New York Mets in 1986. The "Bud Black market" is an off-season free-agent marketplace where mediocre pitchers receive major dollars. "Steve Blass disease" (suffered conspicuously in relatively recent history by Steve Sax and Chuck Knoblauch) is a psychological condition describable as an infielder's inexplicable loss of ability to throw accurately to first base. To be "Wally Pipped" is to get hurt and replaced by a superior player. After sustaining an injury in 1925, Pipp was replaced by a kid named Lou Gehrig. The most recent player to suffer the indignity of eponymy is pitcher Carl Pavano. After an outstanding 2003 season with the Florida Marlins, the Yankees signed Pavano for four years and big money. The hurler promptly morphed into a walking doctor's note (his many ailments included "bruised buttocks"), and he spent nearly his entire stint with the club on the disabled list. In *The Yankee Years*, Joe Torre and Tom Verducci reported that Yankees players took to calling the disabled list "The Pavano."

Pitchers and hitters use the same slang, but its jauntiness somehow feels most pertinent when describing pitching. When a hurler toes the slab he wants to throw peas or seeds, not watermelons or cantaloupes. So, when he's cruising or twirling or canceling Christmas, he's also tossing beebees. If an elbow-bender (*a k a* slabster, moundsman or box artist) is serving them up down the crock, he's liable to surrender a few gopher balls. A cement mixer—the dreaded hanging slider—is a dastardly thing for a pitcher (chuck and duck!). Cookies and cherries like this result in laser shows. Traffic (wind) can be a friend or an enemy. Punchados are welcome, but they aren't the only way to get a hitter out: a hurlsmith will gladly accept a can of corn, a worm burner, a nubber on an excuse-me swing or something right up the elevator shaft. Nothing ticks off a heaver like painting the black and having some Punch-and-Judy green pea bloop a duck snort, Texas Leaguer or Baltimore chop for a safety. "Shit-can" is a hurler's verb for eliminating an ineffective pitch. "Bugs Bunny" is an adjective used to describe an exaggeratedly slow changeup, the type with which the eponymous cartoon character so often fooled opponents.

More pitch-specific adjectives: Frisbee (a broadly breaking slider), riding (high four-seam fastball), disappearing (splitter), knee-buckling (curve), boring (two-seam fastball or cutter), heavy (sinker), dancing (knuckler). Most individual pitches have a bounty of slang associated with them. A lazy search through Dickson's dictionary yielded a baker's dozen of synonyms for curveball: yakker, hammer, wrinkle, Yak attack, bender, hook, 12 to 6, zigzagger, pretzel, cow's horn, dipsy-doodle, snake jazz and Uncle Charlie (which has tantalizingly unknown origins). My Little League team called it the "deuce," a tribute to catchers' universal two-fingered sign for the pitch. Throw too many of these puppies and you gas your wing, ending up a crockery limb with a cunny thumb. Fastballs can be gas, heat, hair, cheese, express and scores more. A "horse" is a high compliment given to unusually durable pitchers. Right-handed pitchers, who are more common than their left-handed counterparts, aren't often tagged with slang, but lefties are portsiders, southpaws, crooked arms and corkscrew arms. Because he is thought to throw softer, a lefty is rarely a "gasface," but he is often "crafty." A "slinger" is a pitcher with a wild throwing motion akin to heaving the ball from a slingshot. A "thrower" is a derogatory term for a pitcher who lacks the mental aptitude to be a thinker on the mound; conversely, an effectively analytical moundsman is an "artist."

Between steroids, astronomical ticket prices, generally dispiriting corporatization and unconscionable multimillion-dollar player salaries in the face of a great recession, the modern baseball fan needs a lift. ("Pick him up!" a ballplayer with jinegar might say.) The slang of the game is its quaint romance, the connective tissue between Ty Cobb and Ty Wigginton. Honestly, it's gratifying to know of a subculture of such pointless innovation, one without goals or aspirations, one not intended to impress the public or one's boss. Baseball slang is a tradition of creativity passed through generations by dirtbags and muffins alike—not a set with a literary reputation. But the Nabokovian sense of play with the English language evident in *Dickson's Baseball Dictionary* proves that the boys of summer really are unlikely poets. That the cliché-driveling doofuses bumbling their way through postgame interviews are the innovators of superlative job-related slang like green weenie (an obscure legend turned souvenir by superstitious Pittsburgh Pirates fans in the '60s) is both delightful and maddening. Maybe if my job were palling around and tossing the bulb with a bunch of apple-knockers all day I'd also end up an inspired poet of whimsy. But maybe that's just a Rickeyism from the rhubarbs. ■

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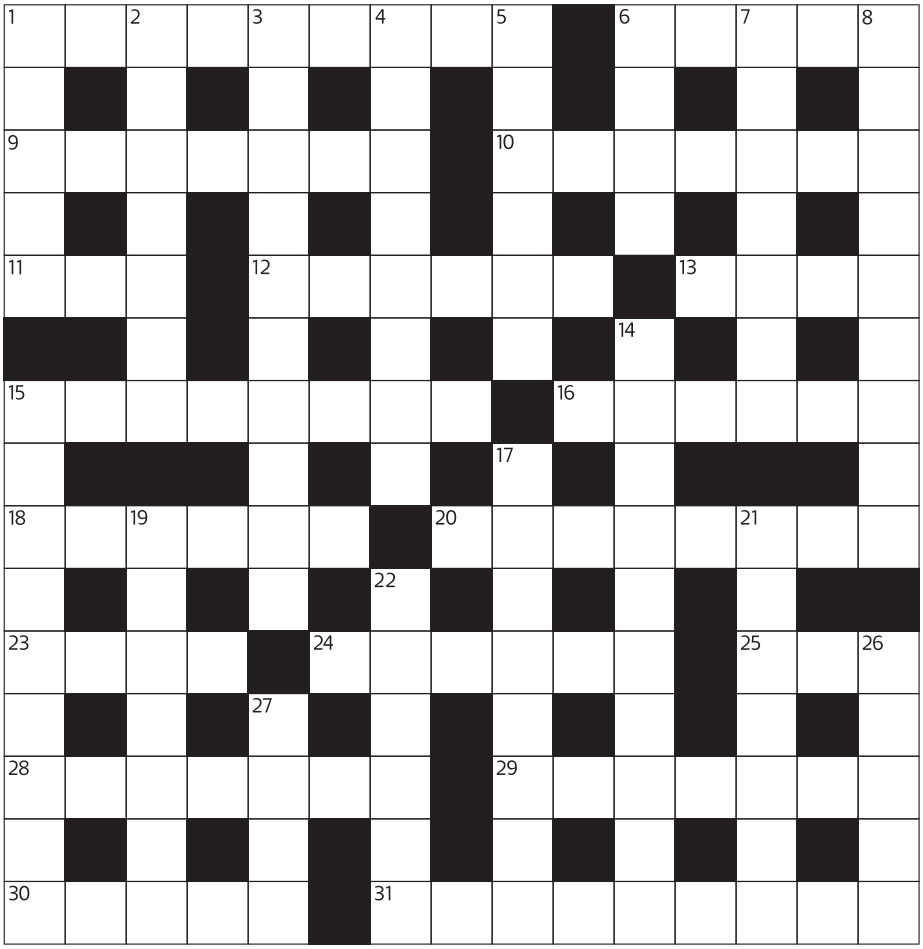

## ACROSS

1 The old woman who lived in a shoe had one, and it's a big deal! (4,5)

6 They were found upon the Swanee River, when they were old. (5)

9 see 13

10 The London maid gets grand before the queen—and that's how the knights got around! (7)

11, 25 and 24 You would be surprised to meet another driver headed for you here. (3-3,6)

12 With a lot of money, as some say, the young fellow could get mixed up with the abridged Oxford English Dictionary. (6)

13, 29 and 9 Someone like Huey entertaining himself at the Victrola with these? (4-7,7)

15 Often rounded up by the police, as one imagines. (8)

16 A crystalline solid in back—for those who must have gone to school. (6)

18 Women may wear such, like the Boston Strangler. (6)

20 Most of what some write for the newspaper shows what the commuter may travel on. (But an early traveler was responsible for a place in five states!) (8)

23 Goes around and around—possibly someone like Nelson. (4)

24 and 25 see 11

28 Study the writing—and don't take it out of this! (7)

29 see 13

30 and 1 down Known expressly? (One might be found in Somerset and the other in North Dakota.) (5,5)

31 It's dumb, but it doesn't mean you can't see and feel and smell this way. (9)

## DOWN

1 see 30 across

2 Do toadies show an absence of something important? Yes, possibly at last! (7)

3 How the captain of the Pinafore swore! (6,4)

4 Raises the little pies, just like obnoxious newcomers! (8)

5 The final note to a list he had made short—with acid applied. (6)

6 and 27 Squashes down where some people live, sent astray. (8)

7 In Paris the guy who takes care of the horses has plenty of space to sit in. (3-4)

8 Harems show the direction an old piece of cloth takes, to possibly soil the result. (9)

14 To describe something like "not feeling good," you and I get to badly treat the rest of it! (10)

15 Worshiped by some as a favorite, it's not the "holy" type a onetime sportscaster often spouted. (6,3)

17 Sounds like a witticism of Oliver Wendell—but it's really just like house material. (8)

19 The spoken form has a lot of noise—with a number being first or second, for instance. (7)

21 "Fab" owl in English shows—this might be a knotty problem! (7)

22 Makes an assertion in our country, being united. (6)

26 What they work on might be safe, with the next-to-last letter having things hatched this way. (5)

27 see 6

## SOLUTION TO PUZZLE NO. 3170

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You may have thought that an anti-aging pill would only be available far into the future. But the effects of resveratrol have been proven as scientific fact... today. Even better, resveratrol is a naturally-occurring substance found in the skin of grapes and red wine, not manufactured in some laboratory. The key to living longer may be found inside your favorite bottle of red wine.

But don't try to drink yourself healthy, because it would take **50 bottles day**! Now there is a way to take resveratrol without the alcohol, calories and high cost. Vinotrol™, with 50mg of resveratrol derived from grapes and roots, provides the equivalent of the resveratrol in **278 five ounce glasses of Pinot Noir.**

"We have something (resveratrol) that **extends the life of every species** it's (been) given to. We're 50 years ahead of where I'd thought we would be 10 years ago," said a leading professor of pathology at Harvard Medical School, reported by the *NY Times*.

Such a potent concentrate delivers all of resveratrol's remarkable benefits, promoting circulation, blood flow, immune system, energy and healthy arteries.

### Has the "The French Paradox" finally been explained?

Resveratrol is conjectured to be a partial explanation for "The French Paradox," the puzzling fact that people in France enjoy a high-fat diet yet suffer less heart disease than Americans and live significantly longer lives (in some cases up to 40%).

Even though French diets are crammed with loads of bread, cheese, rich cream sauces and decadent desserts... the resveratrol in red wine may have acted as their secret weapon. It is thought that the resveratrol protected them against unhealthy triglycerides, high cholesterol and skyrocketing blood pressure.

### Trick your body into "aging in slow motion"

Reduction in cholesterol, body fat and oxidation is believed to help slow the age process considerably. Not only will you feel better, but the powerful antioxidants in Vinotrol™ will help fight the premature signs of aging. Resveratrol will help protect the collagen and elastin in your skin, which can lead to fewer wrinkles and a more youthful appearance.

### Can you live years longer and feel years younger?

What's the point in living longer if you're not going to live better? Resveratol floods your system with powerful antioxidants and helps flush out lipids and free radicals. Combined with the extra boost to your brain, immune system and everyday energy, you'll wonder how you ever went without this red wine wonder.

Don't wait decades for giant drug conglomerates to figure out a way to charge you a fortune for the same benefits you can get for pennies on your own. Call today!

### Having a Hard Time Finding Vinotrol™?

The manufacturer and the laboratories of Vinotrol™ are so confident in their anti-aging technology that they are offering a 30-day, risk-free trial offer. You must call immediately to qualify for the limited number of trials that are available. Start your new anti-aging program today with your risk-free supply of Vinotrol™ (50 mg resveratrol) for just a small shipping and processing fee. Call toll-free 888-784-3459.

**Call 888-784-3459 to get your Vinotrol™ 30-Day Risk Free Trial Offer Today!**

**Mention Promotion Code VL100010 for a Free Upgrade!**

*These statements have not been evaluated by the FDA. This product is not meant to diagnose or treat any disease. Vinotrol is not endorsed, associated or affiliated in any way with Harvard University, Johns Hopkins, Salk Institute or UC Davis Medical. * CBS News, Nov 1, 2006*

**Harvard Medical School, Johns Hopkins, Salk Institute and UC Davis Medical Research Proves That Powerful Red Wine Extract Holds the Secret to Living a Longer, Healthier and More Vibrant Life**

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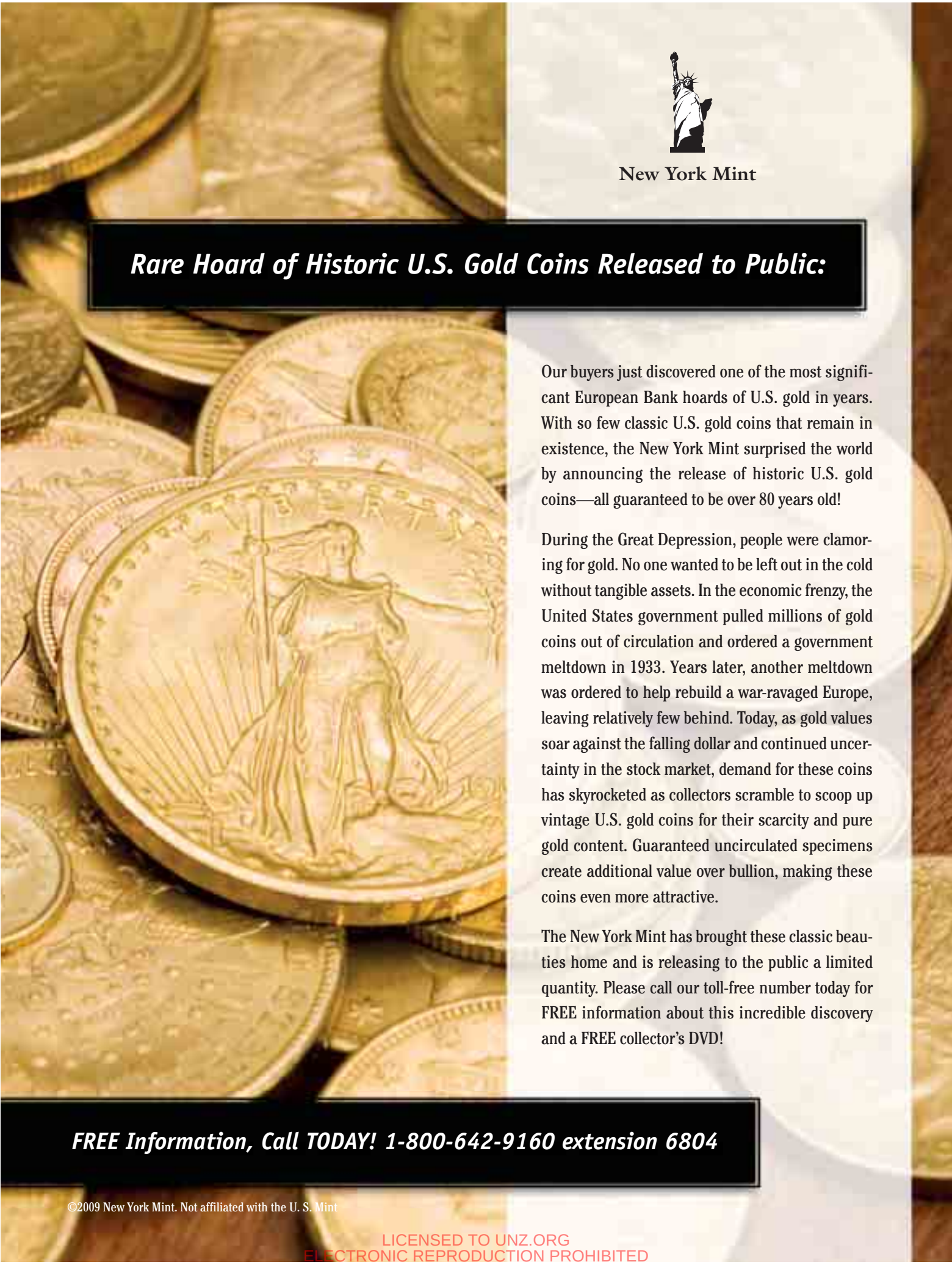

New York Mint

# Rare Hoard of Historic U.S. Gold Coins Released to Public:

Our buyers just discovered one of the most significant European Bank hoards of U.S. gold in years. With so few classic U.S. gold coins that remain in existence, the New York Mint surprised the world by announcing the release of historic U.S. gold coins—all guaranteed to be over 80 years old!

During the Great Depression, people were clamoring for gold. No one wanted to be left out in the cold without tangible assets. In the economic frenzy, the United States government pulled millions of gold coins out of circulation and ordered a government meltdown in 1933. Years later, another meltdown was ordered to help rebuild a war-ravaged Europe, leaving relatively few behind. Today, as gold values soar against the falling dollar and continued uncertainty in the stock market, demand for these coins has skyrocketed as collectors scramble to scoop up vintage U.S. gold coins for their scarcity and pure gold content. Guaranteed uncirculated specimens create additional value over bullion, making these coins even more attractive.

The New York Mint has brought these classic beauties home and is releasing to the public a limited quantity. Please call our toll-free number today for FREE information about this incredible discovery and a FREE collector's DVD!

**FREE Information, Call TODAY! 1-800-642-9160 extension 6804**

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